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# Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

*Provisional*

## 6168th meeting

Thursday, 23 July 2009, 11 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Rugunda | (Uganda) |
| *Members*: | Austria | Mr. Mayr-Harting |
| | Burkina Faso | Mr. Koudougou |
| | China | Mr. Liu Zhenmin |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. Guillermet |
| | Croatia | Mr. Vilović |
| | France | Mr. Lacroix |
| | Japan | Mr. Takasu |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Dabbashi |
| | Mexico | Mr. Puente |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Dolgov |
| | Turkey | Mr. Çorman |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Quarrey |
| | United States of America | Ms. DiCarlo |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Hoang Chi Trung |

## Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Twenty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2009/344)

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*The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.*

## Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

## The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

### Twenty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2009/344)

**The President**: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.*

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Choi Young-Jin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Choi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/344, which contains the twenty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Choi Young-Jin, to whom I now give the floor.

**Mr. Choi Young-Jin**: The announcement of the new Ivorian presidential election date of 29 November 2009 is a very positive step towards the resolution of the Ivorian crisis. This progress was made possible by the determined efforts of the Ivorian protagonists and the timely intervention of the Facilitator.

Also, unmistakable worrying signs of probable delays in both the elections and the reunification process notwithstanding, solid and significant achievements have been made in the Ivorian electoral process. They include the mobile court operation and the identification and voter registration operation, which resulted in over 6.5 million people identified. All the major protagonists appear to have accepted the end of the voter registration operation on 30 June 2009, which is another positive step forward.

It should be highlighted that these historic and strategic achievements have been accomplished without a single major incident. The prevailing climate of peace and stability attests to the maturity of the political culture and the spirit of compromise and non-violence of the Ivorian people, as well as the critical contribution made by the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and the impartial forces.

The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire will leave no stone unturned in its provision of assistance and in its role of accompanying the process with a view to minimizing any further delay in the electoral and reunification processes.

However, given the ownership by the Ivorian protagonists of the Ivorian peace process, it is incumbent on them to deliver on their commitment to the 29 November presidential election as well as on the reunification-related provisions of the fourth supplementary agreement to the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (Ouaga IV), which increasingly appear to place conditions on the electoral process.

The second half of 2009 appears to be decisive for the Ivorian peace process. If things proceed as envisioned and planned by the Ouagadougou Political Agreement protagonists, both the electoral and the reunification processes should produce irreversible results by September. On the other hand, those processes may encounter profound difficulties in September if the complicated political-security-financial matrix facing the Ouagadougou Political Agreement process remains unresolved.

In terms of Ouaga IV, four critical reunification-related issues are to be accomplished at least two months prior to the election, that is by September. They are, first, the transfer of authority from zone commanders to préfets; secondly, the centralization of the treasury; thirdly, the profiling of Forces nouvelles — the rebel elements — for integration into the army, police, gendarmerie and as ex-combatants; and fourthly, their reintegration as well as payment. Numerous efforts have been made to address those issues, but things are not moving as planned. Genuine progress has yet to materialize.

Yet, even before we worry about reunification issues of a political nature, the Ivorian elections management body appears to be struggling with the more chronic questions of managing and planning the electoral process. As it stands now, non-political challenges, such as the technical, managerial and planning aspects of the electoral process, are rapidly emerging as the major impediments to respecting the 29 November deadline. These non-political impediments are not to be underestimated. We have already seen that the identification process, originally planned to last six weeks, eventually lasted nine months and two weeks, from September 2008 to June 2009. A public electoral timeline with detailed stages will constitute one of the most important remedies to this chronic and pervasive problem.

Given this mixed picture of worrying signs amid solid progress, and given that the nature of these worrying signs will become more evident in September, we may have to develop options in the run-up to the next Security Council consultations on Côte d'Ivoire, due in October, with a view to finding a way to reconcile the contradictions currently facing the Ivorian electoral and reunification processes.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Choi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

**Mr. Djédjé** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to make a modest contribution at this meeting of the Security Council on the twenty-first report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2009/344). I wish first of all to express my Government's appreciation for the quality of the report, which describes progress made in the implementation of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire.

As the Secretary-General acknowledges in the report before the Council, significant progress was made during the past two years in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement and the supplementary agreements. Indeed, the political environment in Cote d'Ivoire continues to be peaceful due to gains made through implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

The President of the Republic and the Prime Minister continue to carry out their activities in the peace process with a view to strengthening the social environment in the country. Among those activities are State visits by the President to various regions of the country previously occupied by the Forces nouvelles. During the most recent visit, the President travelled with the Prime Minister and several other members of the Government to the Montagnes, Bafing and Denguelé regions from 7 to 21 June 2009, to bring peace to the people and reunify the country.

Owing to this overall peaceful climate, all the Ivorian political parties have been calmly carrying out their activities throughout the country. As of 30 June 2009, overall statistics concerning registration for the new identity cards show that about 6.5 million people, or about 75 per cent of the intended target population, have been registered.

Regarding security, the overall situation remained stable during the reporting period, especially with the redeployment of the 8,000 personnel of the Integrated Command Centre throughout the country. A workshop was held in Abidjan on 8 and 9 June to assess the implementation of the fourth supplementary agreement, during which priority activities were identified for the next five months and a timetable was set. The first meeting of entities in charge of following up the implementation of the military aspects of the fourth supplementary agreement was held on Thursday, 25 June. The report of the workshop was endorsed and a programme of work adopted. A meeting will be held every 15 days.

The next meeting of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement will be held on 9 August in Burkina Faso. The meeting will be an opportunity to review the remaining stages of the peace process.

In the coming months, priority will be given to consolidating the reunification of the country, continuing the regroupement, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants, strengthening social cohesion, and preparing and holding credible elections on 29 November.

Following the assignment and ongoing deployment of 8,000 members of mixed units of police and gendarmerie elements, efforts will continue to be made to consolidate the deployment of the mixed forces and to give the Integrated Command Centre the intervention logistics necessary to secure the electoral process. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process already under way should be strengthened through efforts to mobilize and provide in a timely fashion the necessary resources in the framework of the DDR process as soon as possible and in accordance with the recommendations of the fourth supplementary agreement.

With regard to the civil service, we will do our utmost to ensure that the sites in Sangouine, M'Bahiakro and Guingreni open in the coming months so that 700 young people trained in the use of firearms can be hosted with full room and board. The proposed financing from the European Union, totalling $7 million, should help to start the training of 4,000 people in six new vocational training centres rehabilitated by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation.

Together with financing from the World Bank amounting to $17 million, which was concluded on 11 February, it will be possible to train in two years up to 12,000 ex-combatants in eight centres: Bouaké, M'Bahiakro, Man, Gotongouiné, Guingreni, Korhogo, Daloa and Bondoukou. In addition, 10 other provisional centres for other types of training would be established.

Côte d'Ivoire is now irrevocably engaged in the electoral process, with nearly 6.5 million people registered in the country and abroad as of 30 June 2009, representing 75 per cent of the target population. The most recent electoral laws under consideration will be adopted shortly by the Government in order to accelerate the implementation of the electoral process so that the first round of elections can be held on 29 November. All the benchmarks and performance indicators for the major areas identified in the Ouagadougou Agreement and its supplementary agreements, and annexed to the report of the Secretary-General show steady progress in, if not the completion of, the main stages of the process for ending the crisis.

All the latest information available to my delegation points to the fact that presidential elections will be held on 29 November, based on the following timeline. Data processing for producing the voter registration list started two days ago on 21 July, and will end on 25 August. The provisional list will be issued in early September. Claims regarding the provisional list will be addressed throughout September. The final electoral list will be issued during the first week of October. Voter cards and national identity cards will be distributed in October and November. The electoral campaign will start on 15 November.

All these efforts by the Ivorian authorities should give rise to renewed optimism as to the effective holding of the first round of the presidential elections on 29 November. Unfortunately, it is during this stage, when the process is nearing completion, that there have been some attacks on the peace process and the institutions in Côte d'Ivoire. My delegation is referring to the recent statements by French personalities who made unfair and unjustified remarks against the Ivorian authorities and the ongoing process.

My delegation would not have dwelt on these remarks had it not been for the fact that they come from a Power which holds a special status in the settlement of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. No one can claim to be unaware that France has troops supporting United Nations peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire, that France is a permanent member of the Security Council, that France initiates draft resolutions on Côte d'Ivoire, and that France is therefore not just anybody in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. This heavy responsibility, as well as the influence and impact that French attitudes and comments can have in Côte d'Ivoire, should be reason for a greater sense of restraint and responsibility on France's part.

In any case, in conclusion, I wish to reassure the Council that the first round of presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire will definitely be held on 29 November. Everything is being done politically and logistically, and with the well-appreciated support of the United Nations, to honour that date.

**The President**: The representative of France has asked for the floor.

**Mr. Lacroix** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his comments.

I listened very closely to the comments of the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire. We did not intend to speak at this meeting, but the comments made by Mr. Djédjé, as Council members can well understand, came as some surprise to the French delegation.

France, like all other members of the Security Council, is fully committed to supporting Côte d'Ivoire so that all of end phases of the crisis can unfold in the best possible conditions, in particular the holding of elections within the established time frame. France is contributing on the ground as well, through military and financial contributions to the collective international action, and it is determined to continue to do so. The French authorities are committed to ensuring a successful end to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which is, in point of fact, a country that is close to us and with which we have very close ties.

I do not understand what is behind the comments that have been made, but in any event, if they can be interpreted to mean that France is distancing itself from the objectives of the Security Council, I wish to state most emphatically that we do not agree with such an interpretation. France is resolved to pursue its activities, in the framework of the Security Council and on the basis of its resolutions, to assist Côte d'Ivoire to end the crisis and help it to meet its deadlines, in particular the electoral timetable. I solemnly reaffirm that commitment before the members of the Security Council.

**The President**: There are no further speakers on my list.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.*

*The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.*

## Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

## Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

### Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2009/297)

### Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2009/352)

**The President**: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Sudan and Sweden, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Hassan (Sudan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Lidén (Sweden) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.*

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Le Roy to take a seat at the Council table.

I should like to acknowledge the presence at the Council table of His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the Sudan and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Council of Federation and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to him.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members of the Council have before them two reports of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, contained in documents S/2009/297 and S/2009/352.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Le Roy** (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Darfur. The Council has before it the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and related issues (S/2009/352). I should like to highlight a few key points in the report and to share with members some more general observations about our efforts to put an end to this crisis.

First, I wish to confirm that we are entering a new phase in UNAMID's deployment. Over the next few months, we will see the arrival of five more battalions and five more infantry companies. We are also trying to have the final two remaining battalions deployed by the end of the year. As far as the police are concerned, the deployment of nine of the 11 formed police units by December is on track, and we continue to work to ensure that the two remaining units are also deployed by the end of the year.

This final phase of deployment is occurring at a time when a new official will be joining the mission. As members are aware, the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union proposed the appointment of Lieutenant General Patrick Nyamvuba of Rwanda as new UNAMID Force Commander. He will assume his duties by the end of August, taking over from General Martin Luther Agwai.

Permit me to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of General Agwai on behalf of the African Union, the United Nations and, of course, the people of Darfur. He headed the force of one of the largest and most complex peacekeeping operations in history during its particularly difficult initial phase. We are very grateful to him for that.

His successor will join the mission at a time when priorities will be in the process of changing. Thus far, by definition, the emphasis has been on deployment and on developing methods of working with the Government, the parties to the conflict and other actors. While we have made much progress in each of those areas, much certainly remains to be done. In particular, we must not overlook the issue of visas, which we stress at every Tripartite Committee meeting, including the most recent. We will continue to insist that all visas for all nationalities be issued within a reasonable time frame.

As 2009 is moving forward with steady increases each month in the percentage of forces deployed, the mission will soon be able to devote less energy to establishing itself and more to carrying out ground operations, including the implementation of its protection mandate.

That brings me to the second topic I should like to stress. The Secretary-General's report reiterates that UNAMID is basically a protection operation. The arrival of promised military and police assets and the shift from deployment to operations must, above all, be translated into more effective protection work. That will include carrying out even more forward patrols than those already being increasingly undertaken by the mission, and ensuring an even more sustained presence in and around key locations, such as camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), where the most vulnerable populations live. But it will also mean closer collaboration with the rest of the protection community: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and governmental forces, which are also responsible for and engaged in civilian protection.

I discussed this at length with my colleagues during my stay at El Fasher two weeks ago. We agreed that expectations are very high regarding the mission's performance for the rest of the year and that we must do our utmost to meet the challenge.

The third element in the report to which I would like to draw attention concerns the changes in the security situation in Darfur. UNAMID is now carrying out its mission in an environment different from that in which it was initially mandated to function. The report reflects those changes and the context. Very large-scale violence associated with civilian deaths and displacement is no longer a major characteristic of the crisis. Today, attacks are more localized and generally carried out by rebels against the Government or by the Government against rebels, or are even inter-ethnic conflicts.

The deterioration in Chad-Sudan relations is a significant factor in this changing environment. Council members will recall that the 2004 humanitarian ceasefire between the Government and rebels, which gave all of us hope for an imminent end to the violence, was negotiated and signed at N'Djamena. It is difficult to imagine something like that happening today, given the tense relations between Chad and the Sudan. The bombings of Sudanese territory by Chadian military aircraft on 16 July did nothing to improve the situation.

(*spoke in English*)

The evolution of the crisis does not in any way diminish the tragedy of Darfur or lessen the suffering of the 2.7 million displaced, but it does require that our analysis and actions correspond to realities on the ground. The United Nations will have to adapt to be effective. This also affects mediation efforts. The Secretary-General's report also discusses how Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé has worked to recalibrate his approach to reflect the fluidity of the situation on the ground.

Since the report was issued, one positive development has emerged with the release by the Justice and Equality Movement of over 60 prisoners through the mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

A fourth area I would like to highlight relates to the direct link between the Darfur crisis and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). In my 17 July briefing to the Council, I shared our serious concern regarding the status of CPA implementation. Delays, misunderstandings and disagreements between the partners on key issues — including border demarcation and the census results — continue to put the CPA at risk. Failure of the CPA would result in a deep crisis throughout the Sudan and the region and cause further suffering to already vulnerable populations.

In this context, it is of course very important to commend the parties for their conduct in their reaction to the decision on Abyei taken by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on 22 July. They should be commended for the composure they have shown in accepting the decision. The parties must build on their approach to the Court's decision to tackle other key issues and to improve the level and quality of their collaboration.

Despite the good news surrounding Abyei, there is still a sense of drift surrounding CPA implementation, with direct implications for resolving the crisis in Darfur. The uncertainty surrounding elections provide a good example. The contested census, large-scale displacement and volatility — particularly in the area bordering Chad — create enormous risks that the people of Darfur will not be in a position to participate in the electoral process. This would further disenfranchise millions already disempowered by conflict.

The results of any elections would also have enormous impact on the political dispensation in Darfur. Elected officials would constitute a newly minted set of stakeholders and would have to be engaged in discussions of peacemaking in Darfur. There is also a real risk that rebel movements may elect to reduce their engagement in the mediation, preferring to monitor and perhaps seek advantage from the difficulties that the Government of National Unity is facing on CPA implementation.

These, clearly, are only scenarios, but they illustrate the clear linkages between the CPA and the conflict in Darfur. It is now more important than ever that we see both issues as parts of a whole and that we understand both issues to be linked to the marginalization of large portions of the population. I can assure the Council that the Secretariat and the African Union Commission are working together on this basis to support the Sudanese in their efforts to resolve the many serious challenges they face.

In this context, we very much look forward to the recommendations to be made by the High-Level Panel being led by President Mbeki. I met with President Mbeki and his colleagues when I was in Addis Ababa 10 days ago. It is clear that the work they are undertaking will make a significant contribution to our efforts to bring lasting peace to all of the Sudan.

I have focused my remarks on highlighting certain aspects of the Secretary-General's most recent report on UNAMID and Darfur. I would like to conclude by offering some additional observations.

It has been more than five years since the Council first addressed this crisis. While the situation on the ground has changed, we are in many ways no closer to a solution now than we were when the issue was first taken up by this body. This is deeply distressing because of the human suffering that has occurred in the intervening years. It is also deeply frustrating, because the elements of a solution have in many ways always been clear.

The Government must make serious concessions and illustrate its commitment to Darfur through active investment in its people and infrastructure. The rebels must make the interests of their people their sole priority, compromise among themselves and agree a serious platform for discussions. Abstaining from dialogue is not a policy — it is only a posture. The supporters and patrons of both the Government and the rebel movements must once and for all refuse to support war. Dialogue must become the only serious option. The arms and financial support must stop flowing. The safe havens must disappear.

Until there is sustained progress in each of these areas, we will not see a resolution to the crisis. Instead, we will continue to meet in this Chamber to discuss an apparently intractable situation. The alternative is to muster the political will and unity of purpose required to address this crisis in all its heart-wrenching complexity.

Ultimate responsibility for bringing peace and stability to Darfur lies with the Sudanese. This is their right and their obligation. The will to peace and the sacrifices required to achieve it will come from them. We need to continue to hold them to the highest standard in this regard.

At the same time, the international community, and countries in the region in particular, have a central role to play in creating the conditions which will help the Sudanese to address these challenges. These conditions include the provision of concrete incentives to the parties to reach agreement and guarantees that new agreements will be implemented. This Council, along with the African Union Peace and Security Council, which pronounced itself on UNAMID earlier this week, will continue to be called on to mobilize the will and capacity of the parties to transcend this conflict in the only possible way — through a negotiated political agreement that puts an effective end to the marginalization of Darfur.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Le Roy for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Margelov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Alain le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his detailed briefing on the situation in Darfur and the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

The Secretary-General has repeatedly focused on the indivisibility of peace in the Sudan and has noted the need for a comprehensive approach to resolving the conflict in Darfur and to achieving a peaceful settlement in the country.

Our task today is to pave the way to peace in the Sudan. This is a difficult task, especially when we recall that the modern and most recent history of the Sudan has seen an alternation between dependence and independence, conflicts among provinces, religions and ethnic groups, and almost continuous civil war. The country today is in a state of deep civil strife. Military activities of varying intensity are interrupted only by brief and fragile ceasefires. These activities are exacerbating the country's humanitarian problems. Experts claim that, today, the Sudan is either incapable of feeding itself or is having great difficulty doing so. Meeting the alimentary needs of the South alone already requires 75,000 tons of food. The situation is holding only because of lowered demand in the South and the North.

The Sudan requires the ongoing attention of the international community. We must strive to intensify dialogue between the conflicting parties in Darfur and to ensure the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and the South. For now, there is no other way to establish peace in the Sudan.

It is necessary to recall that the conflicts in that country are underpinned by many factors. The reasons for clashes are sometimes difficult to identify clearly. For example, Khartoum officially considers the rebels to be separatists, which defines the conflict as one between separatists and central Government. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon places emphasis on an environmental problem — lack of water — in Darfur and the resulting fighting between sedentary and nomadic populations. There is also the view that the Janjaweed militia is forcing non-believers off their land, which gives the conflict an ostensibly religious dimension. Others believe that the conflict has ethnic roots, and still others focus on natural resources and assert that the various sides are seeking to divide revenues from these resources.

Yet all those elements are present, which means that a kind of civil war over economic interests is under way in the Sudan. A number of humanitarian organizations believe that the Sudanese Government wishes, with the assistance of the Janjaweed, to force African tribes out of Darfur so that they can develop oil fields there.

I believe that all of those elements spoken of by experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations, and others as well, are in play in the tragedy in the Sudan. Hence the difficulty of finding a peaceful settlement. We are convinced that to resolve the problems of Darfur there is no alternative to the parties reaching comprehensive political agreements, first and foremost on bring about security in Darfur. The implementation of such agreements would be supported by UNAMID.

Today, conditions for negotiations between Khartoum and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the main rebel group, have become complicated. It is well known that, in February, with the mediation of the African Union, the United Nations and Qatar, the sides signed an Agreement of Goodwill, which addressed the issues of exchanges of prisoners of war and increasing international humanitarian activity in Darfur. This was followed by the International Criminal Court's (ICC) issuance of a warrant for the arrest of the President of the Sudan, the Sudanese Government's decision to ban the activities of a number of humanitarian missions, JEM's refusal to continue negotiations and new armed conflict among the sides in Darfur.

Recently in Doha, representatives of the Justice and Equality Movement accused the Sudanese Government of having broken off the negotiations, saying that it was Khartoum that had failed to produce any strategic proposals. As a result, the negotiating process is now at an impasse. Moreover, the Qatar agreement of good intentions lacks the signature of an influential field commander, the opposition leader Abdul Wahid Mohammed al-Nur. The international community must actively work to get the sides to focus on resuming political dialogue without preconditions. The dialogue should be truly comprehensive. It is necessary to put pressure on rebel leaders who refuse to participate in a settlement. A number of provisions of Security Council decisions remain relevant, relating to the Council's readiness to take measures against those who hinder progress in the peace process; we believe that this is very important.

An agreement on the normalization of relations with Chad was also signed at Doha, but the fact is that it is not now being observed. There is no doubt that stabilizing Darfur will be impossible without strengthened trust between the Sudan and Chad. We are gravely concerned by violations of the Sudan's borders and air strikes against the territory of Darfur by the Chadian air force. We believe that both sides should demonstrate political will in establishing good-neighbourly relations, which would be in the interest of the entire subregion. In our view, a basis for negotiations and the relevant mechanisms for this normalization already exist.

But we note that the ICC's issuance of a warrant for the arrest of the President of the Sudan, Omer Al-Bashir, does not contribute to a peaceful settlement in Darfur. It is well known that the African Union favours full guarantees for the safety and security of the President of the Sudan: in other words, progress in the negotiations takes priority over the judicial process, because it is considered that activities under the slogan of judicial fairness are undermining the ongoing peace process. And there can be no doubt that the process is ongoing, albeit with certain complications. The African Union also believes that the International Criminal Court is ignoring Arab and African efforts to resolve the conflict in the Sudan.

In the interest of making progress towards a peaceful settlement in Darfur while ensuring fairness and observance of the norms of international law, Russia understands the approach of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement to resolving this political and legal problem. In our view, what is important is making comprehensive progress towards a settlement and ensuring the country's territorial integrity. We are particularly concerned about the general elections planned in the Sudan for April 2010. Time is inexorably moving on, and the process of preparation for those elections is at an impasse. In that connection, a key task is to ensure that the elections are held. Successful elections should bring Sudanese society together. They are also a prerequisite for the next step: the 2011 referendum on the status of Southern Sudan, which, essentially, is the principal element of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

With respect to implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, we welcome the settlement of one of the most complex problems: the conflict over the administrative borders of the Abyei region. We are pleased that Khartoum and Juba both agreed to the decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague and have reaffirmed their commitment to its unfailing implementation. We view this as a very important step forward. We consider that the decision should contribute to preserving the unity of the Sudan, which is of paramount importance for ensuring long-term stability in the country and throughout the African continent.

I wish in conclusion to commend UNAMID for its activities. I have repeatedly observed its work in the field, and I can say that it is effective. We view the Mission as an important integral component of the process of settling the problems of Darfur. It is of particular importance that during the reporting period it was thanks to the activities of peacekeepers it was possible to avoid numerous casualties during armed clashes between the parties to the conflict in Darfur, and also to provide humanitarian assistance to the civilian population.

Let me share a personal impression: in 2009 El Fasher and Nyala were completely different cities from those I saw in 2007; the feeling is completely different there. To a large extent, the feeling one gets when arriving today can be attributed to the activities of UNAMID.

I wish in particular to thank the United Kingdom delegation for having prepared a draft resolution on the extension of the Mission's mandate. The Russian delegation is ready to continue working on that Council decision. It is necessary to ensure a unified approach by the Security Council to resolving the problems of Darfur. Only in that way will it be possible to make progress in the political dialogue among the parties in Darfur, to deploy and ensure the effectiveness of UNAMID and to normalize the humanitarian situation. I wish also to emphasize that we are looking to move ahead in all areas of a Sudan settlement on the sole basis of constructive and equitable dialogue between the international community and the Government of the Sudan, with respect for the country's sovereignty.

**Sir John Sawers** (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his briefing and for introducing the Secretary-General's very helpful report (S/2009/352). It is very welcome that we have Mr. Margelov with us today; it is good to have him here, and his comprehensive statement was very helpful to the Council.

The Sudan remains at the top of the Security Council agenda. We are focused on Darfur today, but the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains the highest priority and the most urgent issue. Let me just put on record that United Kingdom welcomes the responses of all parties to the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on Abyei, which I think will move the situation on the North-South process forward.

On Darfur, the Council's strategy is focused on four tracks: peacekeeping, political, humanitarian and judicial. The Secretary-General's report shows that progress has been made on some of these but that we still have further to go.

On the first track — peacekeeping — we welcome the progress highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on deploying the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The improved cooperation from the Government of the Sudan is particularly welcome. The Secretary-General reports serious concerns still over the slowness with which visas are being issued for UNAMID staff despite the progress of the Tripartite Committee, and we call on the Government of the Sudan to solve that problem and to ensure access to the region for UNAMID personnel and freedom of movement within Darfur, which the Secretary-General also highlights as a serious concern.

Overall, UNAMID's performance still has room to improve. It is now two years since this Council adopted resolution 1769 (2007), and UNAMID has not had the effect that we all wanted it to have. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to reaching 92 per cent deployment by the end of this year, but we are all conscious that previous such targets have been missed. Those relate to the numbers of personnel. The more important measure is UNAMID's capability to implement its mandate across Darfur, and I welcome Mr. Le Roy's estimate on what proportion of UNAMID's design capability is now in place and what proportion will be in place by the end of the year.

The United Kingdom agrees with the Secretary-General that the protection of civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance should be the priority tasks for UNAMID. As UNAMID becomes more able to implement its mandate, it will also be important for us to monitor its progress, identify where the obstacles lie and adjust the tasking and configuration of the force accordingly.

On the second track — the political process — progress remains painfully slow. However effective UNAMID becomes, it will not be able to solve Darfur's problems alone. UNAMID is designed as a peacekeeping force and it needs a peace to keep. The United Kingdom supports the African Union-United Nations Joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Bassolé, and the contribution of the Government of Qatar. I would like to echo what Mr. Margelov said earlier. We urge all parties, including rebel movements, to engage with the Mediator without preconditions and show maximum flexibility to resolve areas of disagreement.

On the third track — the humanitarian — as the Secretary-General notes, the security situation in Darfur remains volatile and the situation for civilians deeply troubling. A staggering 4.7 million Darfuris need humanitarian assistance, with about a third of the population — 2.6 million people — internally displaced and unable to return home. Banditry and sexual violence continue to plague civilians across Darfur, as the Secretary-General's report notes.

It remains inexplicable why the Government of the Sudan wanted to add to the misery of the people of Darfur by expelling 13 international non-governmental organizations. The Secretary-General's report suggests that now some 5,000 fewer international aid workers are in Darfur than before the expulsions — a fall of over 25 per cent. That can only complicate the delivery of humanitarian relief. So efforts must continue to close the gap between need and provision.

The Under-Secretary-General also commented on the regional dimension, and we echo his call for improved relations between Chad and the Sudan. Those are is essential if the people of Darfur are to have a safe and secure future. We need real cooperation between Khartoum and N'Djamena and less trading of accusations.

The fourth track is the judicial one, where progress is needed. No one has been held to account for the crimes of the past six years. We call again on the Sudan to comply with resolution 1593 (2005), relating to the International Criminal Court. To consider article 16 of the Rome Statute for any indictee, we would need to see concrete action for peace by the Government of the Sudan, reflected in changes on the ground and genuine cooperation with the International Criminal Court.

Lastly, UNAMID's mandate expires at the end of this month, and, as Mr. Margelov mentioned, the United Kingdom has circulated a draft resolution to extend it for a further year. In line with the Secretary-General's report, the draft resolution underlines that the protection of civilians and humanitarian relief are the priority issues for UNAMID. In line with the Council's wider peacekeeping agenda, it requests the Secretary-General to develop benchmarks and timelines to track and measure UNAMID's ability to implement its mandate, as we have done with other peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, and the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The draft resolution expresses support for the peace process and calls on all rebel groups to engage, and it calls for an improvement in the humanitarian situation, including the implementation of the Joint Communiqué between the Government of Sudan and the United Nations on Facilitation of Humanitarian Activities in Darfur.

We will continue to conduct consultations with other delegations in order to reach a broad agreement on the draft resolution to put it to the vote next week.

**Mr. Puente** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2009/352). I also welcome the presence of Mr. Mikhail Margelov of the Russian Federation at this meeting of the Security Council.

Mexico supports the actions taken by the United Nations in the Sudan and Darfur, and reiterates its conviction regarding the fundamental and crucial role that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan are playing in providing peace and stability in the country. It hopes that the work of both missions will be reflected in the improvement of the life of the Sudanese people as a whole.

We are pleased to note the improved functioning of the cooperation mechanisms between the Government of the Sudan and the missions deployed on the ground, and we hope that that trend continues so that the missions have better opportunities to discharge their mandates.

We recognize the great importance of the negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement, that were held in Doha with the purpose of assessing the implementation of the Agreement of Goodwill and Confidence-building for the Settlement of the Problem in Darfur, signed by both parties last February, under the auspices of Qatar, the United Nations and the African Union. At the same time, we urge the parties to pursue the path of dialogue and hope that the negotiations will resume and result in significant agreements that contribute to the stability of the Sudan, in particular in the light of the 2010 election.

My delegation notes with concern the risks pointed out by Mr. Le Roy concerning the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In that regard, we recognize the importance of the parties complying with the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration of The Hague on the region of Abyei.

We acknowledge the work of the Joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Bassolé, and of the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur headed by the former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, and we believe that the international community should support their work so as to maintain the current momentum of the mediation work.

Those efforts are indispensable. Although four years have passed since the Security Council decided to refer the situation of Darfur to the International Criminal Court, considering that the scope of the conflict constituted a serious threat to international peace and security, unfortunately the situation has not significantly changed. Mexico reiterates its appeal to the Government of the Sudan to take actions towards the implementation of resolution 1593 (2005) and to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court, which Mexico strongly supports, so as to end the violence and impunity in Darfur.

Furthermore, my delegation is following very closely the tensions on the border between Chad and the Sudan. We call on Chad and the Sudan to seek to normalize their bilateral relations, take decisions that foster a climate of trust, and abstain from supporting the armed rebel groups operating on their territories.

My delegation acknowledges the joint efforts of the Government of the Sudan, the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations to address the vacuum left by the expulsion and disbanding of 16 non-governmental organizations. However, it is necessary to recognize that the quality and the levels of humanitarian assistance are still inadequate.

Moreover, Mexico reiterates its strong condemnation of the use of sexual violence in all its forms, in particular against women and girls, who are primarily internally displaced persons or refugees. We urge all parties to end such acts, take concrete measures to address those cases, and take all possible measures to ensure that such crimes do not go unpunished.

At the same time, we support UNAMID's work in helping to ensure the safe return and resettlement of displaced persons, in particular the voluntary return of about 1,500 people to their homes in the provinces of Donki Dreisa and Muhagiriya in southern Darfur.

We are concerned over the death sentences and arbitrary and illegal arrest and detention as well as cruel treatment and torture during detention by Government security forces. My delegation strongly supports work towards a moratorium on executions and abolition of the death penalty. We believe that the death penalty is one of the most fundamental violations of human rights. As we have often said, my country strongly rejects capital punishment.

Lastly, my delegation thanks the delegation of the United Kingdom for its draft resolution and supports the extension of UNAMID's mandate for one year, with special emphasis being placed on the importance of the commitment of the parties directly involved in the conflict, the international community as a whole and the regional organizations, which should all respect the peace agreements and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We trust that efforts in the region will have a positive impact on achieving a lasting peace in the country.

**Mr. Mayr-Harting** (Austria): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his briefing. I would also like to express our happiness at seeing the presence here today of the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Council of Federation and Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Mikhail Margelov. We are grateful for his contribution to the discussion.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made later by Sweden in its capacity as President of the European Union.

Austria welcomes the progress in deployment achieved by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which now stands at 68 per cent, and hopes that the Mission will, in principle, reach full deployment level by the end of the year. We are also encouraged by the improvement in cooperation in the framework of the Tripartite Committee between the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations. In some areas, improvements are nonetheless required, especially concerning the issuance of visas, customs clearances for equipment and freedom of movement of the mission.

A negotiated political settlement of the crisis in Darfur remains the only solution to the crisis. Austria would like to reiterate its full support for the Joint African Union-United Nations Mediation. We are concerned at the lack of progress in the implementation of the Doha agreement and call upon the signatories to engage in substantive negotiations without preconditions. An inclusive approach involving all stakeholders, including civil society, is essential. From our point of view, particular efforts should be made to include women. Regional actors and the international community need to make continued efforts to bring all non-participating groups to the negotiation table.

Like others, we are also concerned by the increased instability along the Sudan-Chad border and by the deterioration of relations between the two countries. We fully support all efforts by countries in the region to ease tensions. We understand that there are discussions under way concerning the implementation of the border observation plan as outlined in the Dakar Agreement. We would welcome a monitoring of the border, and if there can be a role for UNAMID and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) in this matter, it should be positively considered.

The matter of Darfur cannot be viewed separately from the other open issues concerning the Sudan. The Permanent Court of Arbitration announced its decision regarding the boundaries of the disputed area of Abyei on 22 July. Both parties accepted the decision of the Court as final and binding. That is a major step in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Both parties need to avoid confrontation and now have to work together to inform the population about the decision and see to it that it is implemented.

The position of Austria on the issue of cooperation with the International Criminal Court is well known. At the same time, Austria welcomes the African Union initiative to establish the High-Level Panel on Darfur under the leadership of President Mbeki and hopes that this initiative will also help to address the matter of accountability. Austria believes that the questions of judicial reform and transitional justice mechanisms need to be addressed in any settlement.

Small-scale but consistent returns of internally displaced persons have been occurring in some places in Darfur. Large-scale conflict has decreased. Security conditions have to be created which are conducive to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). I make this point because the security situation remains volatile and poses an ongoing threat to civilians as well as to United Nations and humanitarian staff.

Austria is concerned that banditry and sexual violence continue to plague civilians throughout Darfur. To protect the civilian population it will be important to maintain the security and civilian character of IDP camps and to prevent any recruitment by armed groups of individuals, including children, in or around the camps. All parties to the conflict must show restraint and abide by their obligations to protect the civilian population under human rights law and international humanitarian law. We expect the Government of the Sudan to continue to ensure the safety and security of all United Nations personnel as well as of humanitarian workers.

The decision by the Government of the Sudan to expel and dissolve 16 humanitarian and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has had a detrimental effect on the work of UNAMID. Efforts by the United Nations, the Government of the Sudan and remaining NGOs have narrowed some of the gaps in the humanitarian field. However, the number of aid workers remains below pre-expulsion levels. Particularly in remote locations, it is difficult for humanitarian assistance to reach those in need. The Sudanese Government has to assume its responsibility to safeguard and provide food, shelter and health care for the population of Darfur and other areas affected by the expulsion of the humanitarian NGOs.

Last but not least, we would like to commend the work done by UNAMID personnel and humanitarian staff in Darfur under very difficult conditions. Austria fully supports the extension of UNAMID's mandate for one year, until 31 July 2010. We thank the United Kingdom for its efforts on a draft resolution on this matter.

**Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative to convene this meeting on the situation in Darfur. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy for his briefing. We welcome the participation in this debate of His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the Sudan.

With respect to the political process in Darfur, my delegation would like to welcome, once again, the signing of the Agreement of Goodwill and Confidence-Building for the Settlement of the Problem in Darfur, which occurred in February 2009 in Doha, between the Sudanese Government and the Justice and Equality Movement. However, in the light of the ongoing disagreements, there is still much to be done by the parties to make it more effective, in creating the best possible conditions for continuing political negotiations.

My delegation urges the parties to work in good faith towards a framework agreement for a complete cessation of hostilities and the opening of substantive negotiations to put an end to the conflict, in accordance with the Agreement of Goodwill.

In this respect, we welcome the efforts of the Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator to work with the parties; these support the Qatar peace initiative to make progress in the negotiations, and we encourage the parties to join these efforts. We also support the initiatives to make the political dialogue as inclusive as possible, especially on the ground, where the armed groups have come together and shown their intention to join the political negotiations.

We welcome the role played by Libya in the mediation process and the announcement made by the leaders of several rebel groups during the 29 June 2009 Tripoli meeting to undertake a constructive dialogue with the Sudanese Government in Doha.

We invite the international community, in particular the members of the Security Council, to use their influence to encourage the parties to undertake genuine substantive political negotiations, with a view to the signing of this agreement.

At the subregional level, continuing tension between Chad and the Sudan, in particular the incidents that have taken place in the past few days, as well as the connections between rebel groups on both sides of the borders, cannot but be a source of serious concern. We encourage these two neighbours to prioritize good-faith cooperation, in the framework of the Dakar Agreement, to improve their bilateral relations and find a solution to their differences.

We welcome the ongoing deployment of the contingents of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). It is essential, however, that the logistical means that the mission needs be made available to enable it to become fully operational and carry out its mandate. We also welcome the good efforts of the Sudanese Government and its commitment, in the framework of the Tripartite Committee of the African Union, the Sudanese Government and the United Nations, to cooperate fully in the effective implementation of UNAMID's mandate.

With respect to the issue of the international warrant for the arrest of President of the Sudan issued by the International Criminal Court, my country reiterates the call of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement for the implementation of article 16 of the Rome Statute in order to preserve the integrity of the political process in Darfur and throughout the Sudan. Once again, our position is that fighting impunity in Darfur does not exclude the quest for peace.

We take this opportunity to welcome the acceptance by the Governments of the South and North Sudan of the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on settling the border dispute in the Abyei region. We are convinced that the implementation of this agreement in good faith by both parties will be another element in favour of peace in Sudan.

The humanitarian situation continues to depend on the security situation in the region, as well as on the need for the parties to honour their commitments and to create an environment conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

We applaud the Sudanese Government's decision to authorize the return of some non-governmental organizations that had been expelled. Burkina Faso continues to try to persuade the Sudanese Government, which bears the responsibility to protect civilians, to pursue its efforts, together with the United Nations, to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches vulnerable populations. We also welcome the cooperation between the Sudanese Government and United Nations agencies with a view to finding appropriate solutions to humanitarian issues, and we encourage the Government to continue its efforts.

It is also essential that humanitarian agencies working in Darfur and the Sudanese authorities create excellent, trusting working relations. It is also essential that the international community, particularly the Security Council, continue to encourage the parties to create conditions of trust and dialogue so as not to weaken the political process under way.

In conclusion, my delegation would once again like to congratulate UNAMID on its tireless efforts and commitment, and, of course, to thank the countries contributing troops to UNAMID. We also thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for submitting the draft resolution before us.

**Mr. Le Luong Minh** (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his comprehensive briefing. I welcome the presence and participation of Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the Russian President, in the Council's meeting today.

More than a year and a half have elapsed since the inception of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and its deployment in Darfur. In the face of enormous challenges, UNAMID has managed to attain 68 per cent of its authorized strength and has played an indispensable role in improving the security situation and facilitating humanitarian assistance in Darfur. Through its confidence-building patrols, human rights monitoring missions and humanitarian projects, UNAMID has made commendable contributions to the protection of the civilian population. The Joint Special

Representative's remarks during his recent briefing of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, to the effect that the security situation in Darfur had considerably improved since the transition of authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan to UNAMID, testify to the viability of the international community's biggest investment in peacekeeping operations to date.

The increasing effectiveness of UNAMID operations is largely attributable to the Tripartite Mechanism of cooperation between the Sudanese Government, the United Nations and the African Union. It is essential to further promote cooperation and dialogue between the parties, not only in the field of peacekeeping, but also in humanitarian activities aimed at redressing the adverse impact of the departure of 13 international non-governmental organizations early last March.

UNAMID's mandated operations continue to be hampered by resource constraints, as well as by the recalcitrant attitude of many armed groups. We call upon all able donor countries and troop-contributing countries to extend the necessary resources to UNAMID, especially its urgent needs in air mobility and force enablers, in order to expedite full deployment of the mission. Actions against the rebel groups that sabotage and obstruct UNAMID operations must also be strengthened.

The current situation in Darfur and the subregion underlines the importance of UNAMID's continued presence. We welcome the decision on 21 July by the African Union's Peace and Security Council to extend the mandate of UNAMID for another year and to appoint a new commander for UNAMID. As the Security Council is expected to renew UNAMID's mandate later this month, Viet Nam reiterates its strong support for an early and full deployment of the mission. It is our deep conviction that, once fully deployed, UNAMID will contribute more effectively to the consolidation of the security environment in its areas of operation, as well as to the Darfur peace process. We thank the United Kingdom delegation for preparing a draft resolution on this matter, and look forward to contributing to its consensus.

There is no military solution to the Darfur conflict. Viet Nam has consistently reaffirmed its full support for a comprehensive political solution to the issue of Darfur. The recent resumption of talks between the Sudanese Government and the Justice and Equality Movement on implementing the Doha Agreement is a step in the right direction, albeit with limited success due conditions imposed by the Sudanese Government. All parties concerned, especially the rebel movements, must demonstrate goodwill and fully engage in constructive dialogue and peace talks without preconditions under the auspices of the Joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Djibrill Bassolé.

Tension in the Chad-Sudan border areas continues to threaten regional peace and security, as well as UNAMID's operations. We call upon all parties concerned and regional States to exercise the utmost restraint, resolve their differences peacefully and engage fully in dialogue to defuse the current crisis in Darfur.

Conscious of the organic relationship between peace and justice in Darfur, we would like to reiterate our concern, also expressed by the African Union, the League of Arab Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, about the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant issued against the President of the Sudan, and call for further caution in this connection.

To succeed, mediation efforts must be better coordinated and concerted. We highly appreciate the close cooperation and consultations between Mr. Bassolé and Qatar, Libya and the African Union's High-Level Panel on Darfur in their common search for a satisfactory solution to the Darfur conflict. Given the indivisibility of peace in the Sudan and the critical thresholds of the 2010 elections and 2011 referendum, further and closer coordination of efforts between UNAMID and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan is crucial to both the Darfur peace process and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and thus to restoring lasting peace and stability to Darfur and the Sudan at large.

**Mr. Çorman** (Turkey): We welcome the Secretary-General's reports (S/2009/297 and S/2009/352) and thank Under-Secretary General Le Roy for his briefing. We also appreciate the presence and contribution of His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation.

Turkey welcomes the progress made so far in the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The many challenges intrinsic to the complex setting in which that deployment is ongoing have made it hard for UNAMID to reach full operational capability. The

Secretary-General's projection that UNAMID will reach 92 per cent of its authorized strength by the end of the year is very noteworthy. That goal must be met.

Turkey commends the significant progress already made possible through the work of the Tripartite Committee, comprised of the African Union (AU), the United Nations and the Sudanese Government. But much more needs to be done. The coming months will show whether that mechanism is able to reach its full potential. Alleviating operational difficulties faced by UNAMID, whether in the deployment and rotation of forces, the timely flow of equipment or local restrictions on its freedom of movement, is of immediate priority.

UNAMID is already an anchor of stability in Darfur. Once fully operational, it can begin to help turn back the tide. However, there can be no alternative to a political solution to the Darfur crisis. Turkey welcomes and fully supports the Doha process, the work of the AU-United Nations Chief Mediator and the roles being played by Qatar and Libya. While some important progress has been made, a cessation of hostilities that can lead to a lasting ceasefire has not been possible.

In the coming days and months, the Council will have to closely monitor developments in the Doha process and apply pressure when and where necessary. The peace process must be inclusive of all. Certain rebel groups must not be allowed to monopolize the process or dictate the pace, or indeed the terms. All groups must come to the table without preconditions and work with the mediation and their counterparts to bring about viable compromises. In order to facilitate a solution, the Council has to become more involved in the political process and make it clear to all the parties that intransigence comes with a price.

Turkey continues to be concerned about the humanitarian situation in Darfur. The Council has pronounced itself clearly on developments in that regard over the past several months, as has the Secretary-General. We are happy to note the important progress that has been made in filling the gaps that have emerged in the post-4 March environment. However, more needs to be done. In moving forward, it is critically important to keep the humanitarian aspect of the equation apolitical. The humanitarian aid community, working with the United Nations and the Sudanese Government, must be allowed to do its crucial work and should be supported and protected.

Developments on the Sudan-Chad border are a source of growing concern for Turkey. Cross-border aerial bombings, in violation of international law, cannot be condoned. Both countries need to understand that their interests lie not in conflict, but in cooperation. A change of tone and approach is sorely needed. Many agreements have been enacted and not implemented by the two neighbouring nations. A high-level mediation effort building on existing agreements, that takes into consideration the complex dynamics at play and includes the right incentives, is the way forward for lasting political rapprochement.

In all of our efforts with regard to Darfur, be they through UNAMID or the joint mediation effort, the African Union continues to be a vital partner. In that regard, Turkey believes that it will be important for the Council to keep listening intently to the calls made by the African Union on different and sensitive aspects of the Darfur crisis.

We welcome the draft resolution prepared by the delegation of the United Kingdom to extend the mandate of UNAMID for one more year. Turkey will continue to participate actively in the deliberations to finalize that text, with a view to ensuring as balanced and productive an end result as possible.

Finally, Turkey commends all UNAMID personnel and the humanitarian aid workers on the ground for their courage, commitment and composure under fire. We reiterate here that they have our full support.

**Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his briefing on the latest developments in the Sudan and the progress made in the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We also welcome the presence of Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the Sudan.

We are very pleased to note that, in his report (S/2009/352) to the Security Council, the Secretary-General states that progress in UNAMID's deployment has recently accelerated and that it is likely that the goal of completing 92 per cent of its deployment will be reached. We would like to express our great appreciation for the efforts made by the Secretariat, the African Union (AU) and the Government of the Sudan in that regard.

Events have proved that the Tripartite Mechanism is successful and effective and has played a very key role in UNAMID's deployment. The Mechanism will also serve as a very important guarantee for the future successful implementation of the UNAMID peacekeeping functions. The parties should value this hard-won and very effective Mechanism for cooperation. We are convinced that, so long as the three parties maintain their will to cooperate and the current positive momentum, any new problems and situations that might emerge in the peacekeeping process in Darfur can be resolved.

Compared to the gratifying progress in the deployment of the peace Operation, the political process in Darfur has obviously encountered some major obstacles. However, without sincere and serious political negotiations among the parties, UNAMID will continue to face the problem of whether there will be peace for it to keep. Unfortunately, as a result of the exorbitant demands made by some armed rebel groups and their obstinate resistance to negotiation, the future of the political process in Darfur is very difficult to predict. Joint Chief Mediator Djibrill Bassolé has travelled far and wide and actively used his good offices to promote the Doha process. The AU, the League of Arab States and many countries have also made unrelenting efforts to that end. Those efforts are generally in conformity with the policy goals of the Security Council on the question of Darfur. They should therefore be given the support and cooperation of the Council.

We demand that all armed rebel groups show more political will to participate in the Doha process. We also call on the relevant members of the Security Council with influence on the armed rebels to take steps to ensure that those groups participate in the political process in Darfur.

China has always closely followed developments in the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We appreciate the contributions made by the United Nations, the Sudanese Government and the non-governmental organizations that have been providing assistance in Darfur to improve the humanitarian situation there. It is our hope that the parties will continue to strengthen their cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and consultation on an equal footing so that humanitarian relief efforts can be smoothly carried out in Darfur. China has already provided massive humanitarian and development assistance to Darfur. We will continue to work with the rest of the international community in helping the Sudanese Government to continuously improve the living conditions of the people of Darfur.

The AU is a very important strategic partner of the United Nations in resolving the Darfur issue, and its opinions and concerns deserve the close attention of the Security Council. China welcomes the efforts of the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur, under the leadership of the former President of South Africa, to study in depth the situation in Darfur. We look forward to seeing the useful recommendations of the Panel on appropriate ways to resolve such issues as impunity, peaceful reconciliation and healing the wounds of war.

The warrant signed by the International Criminal Court for the arrest of the President of the Sudan has had negative effects on the political process, the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation and humanitarian assistance. Not long ago, the AU summit reiterated its clear opposition to the action of the Court. We hope that all the parties will fully respect the AU's position and strive to cooperate with its efforts to safeguard the overall objective of peace in the Sudan.

UNAMID's mandate will soon expire. We believe that the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation in Darfur has been carried out in very difficult circumstances and that its achievements to date have been hard won. That is due not only to the genuine cooperation of the Tripartite Mechanism, but also to the sincere and pragmatic support of the Security Council. We hope that, this time, the draft resolution renewing UNAMID's mandate will be focused and not revisit controversial issues so as not to undermine cooperation among the parties. In order to resolve those issues, the role of the Tripartite Mechanism should be brought fully into play. That would both assist the Security Council in smoothly implementing its task of peacekeeping in Darfur and serve the long-term interests of Council members in Darfur.

To that end, The Chinese delegation will participate actively in the consultations on the draft resolution renewing UNAMID's mandate. We hope that the Security Council can adopt it as soon as possible.

**Mr. Skračić** (Croatia): Like others, I would like to thank Mr. Le Roy for today's briefing on the situation in Darfur and elsewhere in the Sudan and to welcome the presence of Mr. Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the Sudan.

Once again, we find ourselves faced with a dichotomy when addressing the situation in Darfur. While we would like to welcome direct talks between the Government of the Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) — and, to some extent, between the Sudan and Chad — we are also faced with obstacles along that path, as well as with continued, albeit reduced, violence. That is certainly not commensurate with the goals that the sides are trying to achieve in the negotiations.

Croatia welcomes the stated commitment to the peace process on the part of both the Government of the Sudan and JEM, as expressed by both parties. It includes a reaffirmation of the Agreement of Goodwill and Confidence-Building for the Settlement of the Problem in Darfur, signed in Doha in February this year, as well as the exchange of lists of respective detainees and a willingness to work on the release of prisoners. Against that backdrop, however, we are concerned at the preconditions that each side has set before discussing a framework agreement, with JEM demanding a release of prisoners and the Government insisting on a cessation of hostilities. That has led to an impasse and to a suspension of the talks in Doha.

We are also concerned at the application of numerous death sentences by the Government of the Sudan and the effect that that is having on direct talks with JEM. Both JEM and the Sudanese Government need to understand that military action works only to prolong this protracted conflict and to put civilians at risk. We therefore wholeheartedly support the work being done by Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé, including by encouraging the rebels to come to Doha with a united position. We also support the visit to Darfur by the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur, led by former South African President Mbeki, and look forward to its releasing its findings and making recommendations in the near future.

Croatia concurs with the Secretary-General's assessment and concerns regarding the deterioration in Chad-Sudan relations, especially in light of the continuing support that the sides are providing each other's armed opposition forces. We call upon them to refrain from such acts or acts that may lead to the escalation of tensions and exacerbate the already tense situation on their mutual border. We are particularly concerned about the cross-border incursions from Chadian territory into western Darfur. As the Secretary-General has stated, both sides need to exercise maximum restraint and return to the framework of their mutual agreements, including, but not limited to, the Doha Agreement of 3 May this year and the Dakar Agreement of 13 March last year. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation to the Governments of Qatar and Libya for their mediation efforts.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, my delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's assessment that, although there has been an improvement in the level of cooperation among the Government of the Sudan, the United Nations and the remaining community of non-governmental organizations, serious gaps remain. The consequences of the 4 March expulsions have put a large number of innocent, exhausted civilians at great risk, and we note that the number of humanitarian workers has been reduced by almost 5,000, affecting some 1.1 million beneficiaries of food, water and sanitation aid and 1.5 million who receive health services support. We also note that the rainy season is coming soon and that the World Health Organization has warned of an increased risk of water-borne diseases.

Croatia is concerned by the observation made in the Secretary-General's report that the mission still faces considerable challenges to its freedom of movement and therefore to its ability to implement its mandate. We are also very concerned at the bureaucratic impediments put in place by the Government of the Sudan to obstruct the movement of contingent-owned equipment, including the Nigerian armed personnel carriers and Rwandan vehicles still awaiting customs clearance. We call on the Government of the Sudan to work diligently with UNAMID to address and resolve those issues. The Tripartite Mechanism now in place is a step in the right direction towards identifying and resolving such issues.

Considering the overall precarious situation in UNAMID's area of responsibility, including the continued armed clashes between the Government and rebel movements, stagnation in the implementation of recent initiatives, the build-up of forces and the possibility of further clashes along the Sudan-Chad border, we reiterate our appeal to the Council to place greater emphasis on the regional dimension of UNAMID's work and to enable that mission, other missions in the region and United Nations presences on the ground to cooperate more closely with one another, thereby making them more efficient in fulfilling their respective and often overlapping mandates.

Finally, my delegation would also like to thank the United Kingdom delegation for preparing and distributing the first version of the Security Council draft resolution on UNAMID's extension. We stand ready to work with other Council members on completing this task.

**Mr. Urbina** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I begin by thanking Mr. Le Roy for his latest briefing on the situation in the Sudan and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). I welcome the presence among us of Mr. Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the Sudan.

Costa Rica believes that it is essential to move ahead on four major issues, all of equal importance, that hinder a political settlement of the conflict in the Sudan, directly affect the living conditions of the civilian population, and jeopardize the fulfilment of UNAMID's mandate.

First, relations between the Sudan and Chad cannot remain a source of instability and endless anguish for the civilian population, refugees and internally displaced persons on both sides of the border. It is time for maturity to prevail. The illegal raids, unauthorized flights and bombardment of neighbouring territories must cease. It is time to ensure the full implementation of the Dakar and Doha Agreements and for both countries to end their support for the rebel groups that they harbour, sustain and allow to take refuge in their territories. It is illegal, it is done openly, and it cannot continue.

Secondly, Costa Rica hopes that by the end of the month the Justice and Equality Movement and the Government of the Sudan will have made progress in their negotiations in the context of the peace process and the implementation of the Agreement of Goodwill and Confidence-building for the Settlement of the Problem in Darfur. In that regard, we recognize the work of Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé and support his initiatives to ensure a broadly inclusive process that brings other rebel groups into the peace process and, to that end, establishes a consultative forum in Darfur.

We appreciate the initiatives undertaken by Qatar and Libya, by Mr. Gration and Mr. Margelov, and by the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur. My delegation looks forward to reading the report of the Panel, led by President Mbeki, to be issued in August, and welcomes its proposals on accountability for serious crimes, accelerating the peace process in Darfur and achieving reconciliation among the parties in the region.

Thirdly, disarming civilians who were involved in tribal clashes in the southern Sudan is a priority for the international community. Costa Rica is disturbed by the high number of victims and its potentially negative impact on the peace processes.

Last but certainly not least, we believe that attention must be focused on the deterioration of the humanitarian situation caused by the action of the Government of the Sudan against non-governmental organizations that were responsible for providing more than half the assistance to Darfur. We commend the efforts of the Government of the Sudan, the non-governmental organizations, the international community and agencies of the United Nations system to mitigate the consequences of that regrettable decision, but we are concerned about the sustainability of those efforts and about their quality, which is undoubtedly inferior to that provided before the Government took its decision. It is essential that the 2007 joint communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian activities in Darfur, the main framework for cooperation, continue to be implemented, and that we support the work of the expanded High-Level Committee.

We must remember that the affected humanitarian organizations not only provided services, but also generated an atmosphere beneficial to the safety of the populations they served. Their expulsion created a vacuum in civilian protection in the areas where they were deployed. The alleviation of suffering and protection against abuse are essential elements of humanitarian assistance. Such concerns prompted us to call for the preparation of a report on developments in the humanitarian situation in the Sudan.

In the current circumstances, it is essential that international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to humanitarian access to victims and to the protection of humanitarian personnel, be respected. We regret that humanitarian personnel continue to be robbed and kidnapped, and condemn acts of banditry and sexual violence against the civilian population.

Costa Rica appreciates the contribution of the African Union to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Darfur, but regrets its recent decision to block the cooperation of its members with the International Criminal Court. Like most representatives seated at this table, we know that this decision enjoys limited and half-hearted support, and we trust that the African Union, which has acted in an exemplary manner in many areas, will remedy a decision that taints its history and achievements.

Finally, we thank the United Kingdom for preparing a draft resolution extending the mandate of UNAMID, which the Security Council will shortly adopt. We reiterate our call upon the Sudanese authorities to cooperate fully with UNAMID and the work of the United Nations system throughout the Sudan. The Secretary-General's report notes that 92 per cent of UNAMID's total authorized strength will soon be in place. That will certainly improve the physical protection of civilians. We thank those countries that have contributed personnel to strengthen the mission at a decisive moment. We urge the Government of the Sudan to eliminate all obstacles to UNAMID's movement and patrol activities, to end all detention and improper treatment of its national personnel, and to remove all hindrances to the issuance of visas, as mentioned by Mr. Le Roy. In connection with all these issues, we acknowledge the work of the Tripartite Mechanism of the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan to improve UNAMID's effective deployment.

The situation in the Sudan still requires the Council's tireless attention and a broader approach that takes into account all the manifestations of conflict in the Sudan. I therefore conclude by expressing our satisfaction with the recent definitive decision taken on the issue of the Abyei borders, and call on the parties to respect that decision, as they have pledged to do.

**Ms. DiCarlo** (United States of America): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his briefing and by expressing our gratitude to the personnel of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), who operate in very difficult circumstances.

I should also like to welcome Mr. Mikhail Margelov to the Council and thank him for his helpful comments today.

As other speakers have noted, UNAMID has faced serious challenges in implementing its mandate, but despite these difficulties the mission has provided a stabilizing presence in Darfur. I should like to highlight four areas that we believe to be critical to the mission's success: outstanding deployment issues, prioritization within UNAMID's mandate, support for the peace process and the 2010 elections.

First, we are pleased to see the increased efficiency in UNAMID's deployment at large — progress that we attribute in part to the Tripartite Mechanism spearheaded by Under-Secretary-General Malcorra. We also acknowledge the increased cooperation provided by the Government of the Sudan, upon which UNAMID's deployment and operational ability depend. In this regard, however, we are troubled by the Government of the Sudan's continued failure to issue visas for UNAMID personnel in a timely fashion, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/352). UNAMID's success is predicated on its having experienced staff on the ground. The pace at which visas are being granted and the outright denial of some visas indicate an unacceptable disregard for UNAMID's status-of-forces agreement. The Government of Sudan must fulfil its obligations under that agreement and promptly clear the backlog of visas.

The Secretary-General notes that he expects that all pledged UNAMID assets will be deployed by the end of this year. We welcome that progress, but we note that the assets that have been pledged constitute only 92 per cent of UNAMID's total authorized strength. Certain key assets, particularly critical air assets, have not been forthcoming from Member States. Nonetheless, we believe we must start to focus on measuring UNAMID's capacity to perform its mandate using the resources it has. We hope that in upcoming reports the Secretary-General will be able to report more on UNAMID's operational effectiveness.

Secondly, we believe that the Council must provide guidance to help UNAMID prioritize its activities. The Secretary-General has noted that two most important aspects of UNAMID's mandate are protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian access. We agree. The situation for civilians in Darfur remains deeply troubling. We are particularly concerned by the level of sexual violence against women, and we ask the Secretary-General to work with UNAMID to develop a comprehensive strategy to protect women and girls from such gender-based violence.

No discussion of humanitarian relief can fail to mention the 4 March expulsion by the Government of Sudan of humanitarian organizations. Through the considerable efforts of the United Nations and the international community, a humanitarian crisis was averted. But the Council cannot afford to be complacent simply because the disaster has been warded off through emergency measures. Sustainable delivery of humanitarian relief remains our goal. We must continue to monitor the situation closely, and we will look to UNAMID to maintain its role as facilitator for humanitarian access.

Thirdly, we fully support the dedicated efforts of the Joint United Nations-AU Chief Mediator, Djibrill Bassolé. My Government's Special Envoy, Scott Gration, will continue to work closely with the parties in support of the Chief Mediator's efforts to obtain a cessation of hostilities and to push for a more inclusive peace process.

But as long as the Governments of Sudan and Chad are engaged in active conflict, there can be no peace in Darfur, as underscored by such recent events as the bombings along the Chad-Sudan border. Chad and Sudan have the sovereign right to protect their territorial integrity. But continued tension and rhetoric between the two harm the peace process and undermine stability in the region. We encourage both countries to exercise restraint, to refrain from supporting each other's rebel groups and to work to pull those groups back from the brink.

Finally, let me touch on the issue of elections. Under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, elections are scheduled to take place in April 2010. The Council normally discusses this issue in the context of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), but elections are a national issue and as such must also be discussed when we talk about Darfur. The extent to which Darfuris will be able to participate meaningfully in the voting is a real concern. We look forward to the United Nations elections assessment report and hope that it will contain information on the mechanisms necessary to help protect Darfuri participation. The Council cannot afford to neglect this issue.

UNAMID plays a valuable role. The United States supports the extension of UNAMID's mandate for an additional 12 months, and we thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for preparing the draft resolution.

**Mr. Dabbashi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to thank Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing. I welcome Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation. We are most grateful to him for his statement. My thanks go also to the representative of the Sudan for his presence here today; we look forward to his statement.

We are following closely the deployment of contingents from troop-contributors to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We note that a large number of troops has been deployed. We pay tribute to the efforts of troop-contributing countries and the manner in which they have worked with the Government of the Sudan.

I note also the tripartite mechanism's great importance for the restoration of peace. It has proven effective in removing obstacles to peace, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/352). I commend the tripartite mechanism for its positive achievements, including on the situation regarding visas for UNAMID staff.

There has been a decline in violence in Darfur, and we hope that this trend will continue, enabling displaced persons to return. Despite attacks on members of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, its deployment will continue. But we note that what is needed for peacekeeping is a political operation that enjoys the support of all parties — which is essential for deployment. Benchmarks for the implementation of the Mission's mandate will be unrealistic and irrelevant until the Mission is deployed at full strength and fully equipped, and until there has been tangible progress on the political front, including a ceasefire agreement and agreed modalities for ending the fighting. The highest priority is to forge a strengthened political process and to put pressure on the rebels to unconditionally join the dialogue and the negotiations.

Libya has a geographical, humanitarian and cultural relationship with the Sudan — and in particular with Darfur. We note the commitment undertaken by President Muammar Al-Qadhafi and by Libya to normalization. That is why we are working in cooperation with Qatar, the Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator to ensure that negotiations resume on all aspects of the crisis. The African Union

High-Level Panel on Darfur recently visited Tripoli and met with the leaders of armed forces to discuss modalities for the resumption of dialogue in the Sudan.

Libya understands the effect of relations between Chad and the Sudan on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan and in Darfur. Libya is therefore pursuing its efforts to ease tension and ensure that dialogue can resume with a view to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Dakar peace process, leading to normalization of relations between those two countries. On the humanitarian situation, we welcome what the Government of the Sudan has done to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those that need it, to encourage and cooperate with humanitarian organizations and to grant visas to their staff.

With regard to the International Criminal Court, we urge the Security Council to consider the concerns that have been voiced by the regional organizations, in particular the African Union, which is the principal partner of the Government in Darfur, with a view to continuing peace efforts, especially after the arrest warrant issued by the Court against President Al-Bashir. We hope that the Security Council will take steps to remove the obstacles to the peace efforts in order to fully and permanently resolve the issue of Darfur.

In that regard, at its latest summit, in Sirte, the African Union adopted a resolution, in which it expressed its deep concern that the Security Council had not agreed to apply article 16 of the Rome Statute. Here, we underscore the need to take into consideration the request by the African Union, which as the primary regional organization knows better than any other the best approach to the priorities for the settlement of the Darfur issue, especially since the African Union's commitment to settling the issue of impunity is one of its basic tenets. The High-Level Panel on Darfur, chaired by President Mbeki, has been set up to investigate the human rights violations. The Panel has visited the region three times, and we look forward to its forthcoming report.

In May, the Group of Experts on Sudan sanctions reported that the decision of the International Criminal Court had encouraged certain groups and had interrupted the dialogue or made it more difficult.

Mr. Rodolphe Adada, head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, in his statement to the Security Council on 27 April, said:

> "The ICC issue has dominated and polarized Sudanese political life. It has weakened the position of those in the Sudan who have been working for compromise and consensus". (*S/PV.6112, p. 2*)

I do not think that that statement had a positive effect. Let me say that the fact that certain Security Council members did not take into account the wish of the African Union and of the African Member States that had signed the Rome Statute did not serve justice but, on the contrary, had the potential to undermine the efforts of the International Criminal Court.

There is no doubt that, after years of crisis in Darfur, we are increasingly convinced that that dispute cannot be settled without a comprehensive political settlement that enjoys the support of the international community and, above all, the Security Council, as well as the international and regional actors. That is a realistic precondition for restoring peace and security, putting an end to the deprivation and the impunity and achieving national reconciliation.

The people of Darfur are increasingly aware that a just and lasting peace and national reconciliation and development cannot be achieved by slogans, poverty or an arrest warrant against the President of the Sudan, but rather by support for peace efforts, implementation of development projects and the strengthening of State institutions so as to extend their administration throughout the territory. We hope that the Security Council will contribute to that end.

**Mr. Lacroix** (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I too would like to thank Mr. Alain Le Roy for his presentation and to welcome the presence of Mr. Margelov in the Council.

I would like to make a few comments on various aspects of the issue that we are considering. First of all, in our view, the political process must remain the priority. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Chief Joint Mediator, Mr. Bassolé, and the Qatari facilitation, and we hope that the talks suspended last June will resume as quickly as possible.

The Sudanese Government and the Justice and Equality Movement must fulfil the commitments made during the signing of the declaration of intent of 17 February 2009. We hope that the talks are inclusive, and we support the efforts made by Libya with respect to other rebel movements.

We have noted the establishment by the African Union of a High-Level Panel headed by President Mbeki, and we will closely study its forthcoming conclusions.

We think that the humanitarian situation remains of concern. We welcome the efforts of United Nations to work with the Government of the Sudan to prevent the decision to expel 13 non-governmental organizations last March from having too serious consequences. However, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/352) notes, the fall in the number of humanitarian workers in Darfur has harmed the quality of the aid. In the rainy season, the health situation could deteriorate very quickly. We therefore remain very concerned, and we call on the Sudanese authorities to quickly restore an environment conducive to humanitarian activities.

Moreover, the security risks for the civilian population must not be underestimated. We are pleased that the violence has diminished since the establishment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), but it must be noted that we have moved from a situation of conflict to less intense but generalized violence. The tension in relations between Chad and the Sudan is also of great concern, and we call on those two countries to implement their commitments and to refrain from any provocation.

On the deployment of UNAMID, we have noted the information given by Alain Le Roy. The Secretary-General underscores in his report the improved cooperation with the Sudanese authorities for the deployment of the operation. We welcome that, and we hope that the objective set in the report for the deployment of 92 per cent of the force by December can be achieved.

However, we note that, despite the progress brought about by the Tripartite Mechanism, the Sudanese authorities continue to pose significant obstacles. I am thinking in particular of the issue of visas already mentioned by a number of delegations, which Khartoum is slow to issue. More than 100 European personnel in particular, and others from other regions, are waiting for visas, and that situation is unacceptable.

More than ever, the population in Darfur needs a credible force that can contribute to its security. The year 2009 should see the full deployment of UNAMID and also of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, which to some extent is its counterpart in the regions of Chad and the Central African Republic bordering on Darfur. We call on the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries to increase their efforts in that regard.

We are preparing to renew UNAMID's mandate. We hope that the negotiations held under the auspices of our British colleagues will soon conclude. The discussion on UNAMID's mandate should not be held hostage to other difficult issues, such as those of the fight against impunity and of the International Criminal Court. We believe, and everyone knows, that a lasting peace cannot be established without justice, and we note the absence of real efforts of the Sudanese authorities in that area.

In any case, differences of views on this issue should not prevent us from acting collectively and with determination on the other aspects of resolving the crisis in Darfur. We hope that UNAMID will fully carry out its mandate, in particular the tasks entrusted to it as a priority, namely, protecting civilians and providing security for humanitarian assistance.

Finally, we would conclude with a word on the implementation of the comprehensive political agreement as a follow-up to our consultations last week on the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). At this stage, we are very satisfied that the two parties have indicated their wish to respect the decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on Abyei. We hope that the follow-up to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement will continue to be implemented in this manner, in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill on both sides.

**Mr. Takasu** (Japan): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy for his briefing on the current situation in Darfur. We pay tribute to the men and women of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for their dedicated work in a difficult environment.

We acknowledge that the large-scale battles have been contained. But the security situation in Darfur remains fragile and demands our vigilance. Incidents of violence are continuing, and UNAMID personnel, humanitarian workers and civilians are falling victim. We should make every effort to improve the situation.

For ensuring security in Darfur, improved relations between the Sudan and Chad are important. Aerial bombing in the border area gives cause for concern about security in the area. It is incumbent upon all parties to bring a halt to these hostile and belligerent activities. I urge the Contact Group on the implementation of the Dakar Agreement to resume its negotiations by inviting both the Sudan and Chad to accelerate the reconciliation process.

With regard to the earlier humanitarian situation, we are relieved that the joint collaborative efforts by the Government, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worked reasonably well to fill the gaps in delivering humanitarian assistance after the expulsion of the international NGOs. However, there still remain major challenges in many parts of Darfur where the local population does not have sufficient access to assistance. I urge the Government of the Sudan to make further efforts in providing necessary assistance. For its part, the international community needs to strengthen its support.

UNAMID is expected to play an indispensable role in stabilizing and improving the fragile security and humanitarian situation in Darfur. UNAMID has dedicated its efforts to the protection of civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance as the first priority. Japan endorses and supports a greater focus by UNAMID on civilian protection. There is a significant number of members of the local population and internally displaced persons spread throughout Darfur who are in serious need of humanitarian assistance and are waiting for a helping hand from UNAMID.

Yet the current deployment remains at less than 70 per cent of authorized strength 18 months after inception. This makes it difficult for the mission to implement fully its mandate and to meet high expectations. To expedite deployment, cooperation with the Government of the Sudan is essential. There has been marked progress in deployment lately thanks to the good efforts undertaken through the Tripartite Committee comprising the Government, the African Union and the United Nations. We hope that further efforts will be made towards fuller deployment before the end of the year.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate the need for further improvement on the part of the Government of the Sudan of measures for facilitating assistance, such as the issuance of visas to UNAMID personnel, expedited customs clearance for necessary equipment and enhanced freedom of movement for UNAMID staff.

As the continued presence of UNAMID is essential, we support the extension of its mandate for another 12 months. We are grateful to the United Kingdom for preparing the draft resolution on that subject.

A political and negotiated solution is the only way of resolving the Darfur problem. In that light, I commend the Doha process under the active leadership of Qatar as well as the mediation efforts of Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé and the regional initiatives undertaken by Libya and Egypt. We also commend the valuable contributions made through the international efforts made by many countries in sending special envoys.

We thank Mr. Margelov for sharing his insights with the Council today.

It is our hope that all Sudanese parties concerned, including rebel groups, will participate in and actively engage with those initiatives, which in turn will be strongly supported by us. In parallel with those international initiatives, we should underline the importance of the local and national dialogue for peace and coexistence. Coexistence and reconciliation can be sought most effectively through comprehensive dialogue involving the Government, anti-government forces, traditional leaders, local communities and civil society. We support the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. We urge the African Union and the United Nations, in collaboration with the Government, to ensure that the voices of the many actors be fully reflected in the process.

Lastly, the political process based on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) will have a direct bearing on the Darfur problem. We are encouraged that both parties have accepted the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the Abyei border dispute and have respected the framework of the CPA. It is our strong wish that the positive momentum demonstrated in the spirit of Abyei will be further maintained and will contribute to the implementation of the remaining parts of the CPA and to the resolution of the Darfur problem.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uganda.

I join colleagues in thanking the Secretary-General for his reports on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) (S/2009/297 and S/2009/352) and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Le Roy, for his briefing. I wish also to express appreciation for the contribution to the debate by the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Mikhail Margelov. I also welcome the participation of the representative of the Sudan in the debate.

I wish also to commend UNAMID and its leadership for the important contribution they are making in maintaining and improving the security situation as well as in protecting the civilians in Darfur. In this regard, Uganda condemns continued incidents of attacks against UNAMID and humanitarian staff.

Uganda is encouraged that the deployment of UNAMID is making progress. We commend the Tripartite Mechanism, which has facilitated this process, and encourage all the parties to continue their cooperation within the Mechanism.

Uganda would like to see a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Darfur. We are concerned about the continued insecurity, the lack of progress in the peace process and the negative effect that has on the humanitarian situation.

We commend the Joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Bassolé, and the Government of Qatar for their efforts, which led to the resumption of talks between the Government of the Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement, which had been suspended on 18 June of this year. We call upon the Government of the Sudan and all the opposition groups to engage in the negotiations envisaged by the end of July without any preconditions.

Uganda supports the work of the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur, led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, in its complementary role in the search for peace in Darfur. Uganda welcomes the commitment of the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to abide by and peacefully implement the recent decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the final settlement of the Abyei dispute. The resolution of the Abyei dispute is a major step in the implementation of the CPA.

The increasing tension along the border between the Sudan and Chad is a cause for great concern. Uganda once again calls upon the two countries to improve their relations and to implement the various bilateral agreements that they have reached, including the most recent one, signed in Doha. The normalization of relations between the Sudan and Chad is critical for a comprehensive and lasting peace in Darfur.

Uganda supports the extension of the UNAMID mandate. In this respect, I wish to express our appreciation to the delegation of the United Kingdom for providing the draft resolution for our consideration.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

**Mr. Hassan** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your presidency of the Council for this month. Your neighbouring and friendly State has helped to maintain and strengthen international peace and security, especially in our mother continent, Africa, and in my country, the Sudan, which has strong and eternal ties to yours.

I would also like to welcome Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the Sudan. I also welcome the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Le Roy, and thank him for the objective briefing with which he opened today's meeting, held to discuss the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/352) on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Today's discussion of the report coincides with an important step forward in a relevant area — the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, embodied in the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration pertaining to the Abyei issue. The two partners' strong commitment to implementing the decision is itself an affirmation of the Sudanese people's ability to overcome differences and internal disagreements both on their own and with the help of the international community, and it affirms and strengthens the Sudan's determination to choose unity.

It also further promotes the possibility of achieving a speedy and permanent peace in Darfur, owing in part to much-appreciated ongoing international and regional efforts such as those exerted by sisterly Qatar, and arising from a unified national position aimed at strengthening the initiative of the people of the Sudan. Regional sponsorship has also been forthcoming through the Arab-African initiative and the sincere and unified endeavour to support the Sudanese people's efforts on the part of sisterly Libya and Egypt. All of this has been accomplished under the direct coordination and supervision of the Joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Bassolé, whose mission we support and whose success we are completely committed to.

As we have previously affirmed in this Council, the Government of the Sudan stands by its commitment to achieving comprehensive peace in Darfur as soon as possible through an objective and goal-oriented dialogue. We expect the Security Council to continue to offer the necessary moral and political support for the national, regional and international efforts under way by sending strong, encouraging and supportive messages to those at the negotiation table in order to confirm its objective support for the option of a political settlement. The Council should also send a firm message to those boycotting the negotiations to the effect that the peace train will not wait for them, that the Council will not tolerate a military solution as a way to fulfil their goals and demands, and that a boycott is not an option.

However, the Security Council continues to throw its full weight behind peacekeeping rather than peacemaking, as if peace were supposed to emerge from a vacuum. National and regional efforts have been dedicated to creating this peace, and what we need now is the Council's support for the political process. It is important to note that a permanent member of this very Council, which I need not mention by name, continues to offer safe haven in its capital to one rebel leader who has continually and repeatedly challenged the international will and the peace option by boycotting the political process and endorsing an exclusively military solution.

We appreciate the genuine and sincere efforts of UNAMID, deployed under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and Under-Secretary-General for Field Support Susana Malcorra. We also appreciate the African Union endorsement in all its logistic and technical aspects the Tripartite Mechanism established by the Council. The latest developments surrounding the Mechanism discussed most recently at the sixth meeting of the Tripartite Committee held on 12 July in Khartoum. At that meeting, as at the five previous meetings, the complete commitment and cooperation of the Sudanese Government in facilitating the deployment of UNAMID were reaffirmed. The sixth meeting of the Tripartite Committee further confirmed that the overarching goal of the Mechanism is to deploy 92 per cent of the mission's troops and forces by December 2009, and highlighted the seriousness, cooperation and ambition that characterize the Committee's meetings.

As we informed the Council only a few days ago, the last meeting of the Mechanism addressed many important issues that have been discussed in today's meeting — and some that were not, such as aerial operations, including the provision of a landing base for tactical helicopters — such as mechanisms for expediting deployment procedures and operations, including the issuing of visas.

We must recall that the Sudan is a developing country. We expect the Council to see the situation in its entirety, rather than merely focusing on a dozen or so persons who experienced delays in receiving visas, as if that were the result of a Sudanese policy of non-cooperation or to delay entry, which is completely untrue. We have pledged to facilitate the deployment of personnel. We stand by that pledge and reaffirm it today. We will do our best to ensure that the mission deploys as required as soon as possible.

The meeting also discussed the facilitation of mechanisms and procedures pertaining to local procurement for the mission and customs clearance, as has been mentioned at today's meeting. I simply wish to cite examples that reveal the full picture. We hope that the Council will first support the Tripartite Mechanism by welcoming its achievements to date in terms of the deployment of the Hybrid Operation.

In the context of serious cooperation with regard to the deployment of the Operation, we would also like to refer to the manner in which the humanitarian aspect has been addressed. We would remind the Council that, in recent briefings on the humanitarian situation in Darfur, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has stated that the implementation of the humanitarian protocol with the United Nations is proceeding smoothly. He has also said that the adoption of a fast-track approach has contributed greatly to speeding up access to those in need of humanitarian assistance, especially after the Government of the Sudan extended the protocol in November to facilitate the operations of humanitarian agencies and organizations. In addition, as the Council is aware, a high-level ministerial committee is in place to focus solely on facilitating access for humanitarian operations.

With regard to the references in the report to challenges to humanitarian efforts, such as attacks on convoys, the Security Council is fully aware that some armed groups in Darfur have begun to target humanitarian convoys solely to steal and loot goods. I would also mention the various clashes between armed groups and between cattle herders, farmers and nomads. All of that indicates that the causes of the conflict in Darfur are all rooted in the scarcity of water. That of course has an impact on the security situation and, in turn, on the lifelines of humanitarian aid. In that regard, we emphasize the important role being played by police units. Sudanese police forces, working in close cooperation with the Hybrid Operation in Darfur, continue to work in many places to establish safe corridors and guarantee the security of humanitarian convoys.

As usual, some speakers have referred to the so-called aspect of accountability. With regard to the so-called issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Government of the Sudan, which as the Council knows is not a party to the ICC, has a well-known position that does not need reiterating here. It is final and non-reversible. Major regional organizations have taken a stand on this issue — including, as I have mentioned, the African Union, which is both a strategic and a basic partner for the United Nations in Darfur, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, and regional organizations comprising two thirds of the Members of this Organization. All of them have issued numerous decisions and expressed positions that have convincingly reaffirmed that this heinous legal decision is merely political posturing that has nothing to do with bringing justice to Darfur or establishing peace there. It is a decision that targets the Sudan's unity and integrity as an independent State.

There is no need to reaffirm again today that the Sudanese Government has its own national judicial system capable of achieving justice and accountability. We hope that we do not have to continue to repeat that at the Council. We have fully welcomed and always cooperated with the African Union's Panel of the Wise, led by former South African President Mbeki. All we ask of the Council is that it work to overcome all hurdles to the political process in order to enable it to take its course. A political settlement is the primary solution to this issue.

With regard to Chad and the situation on the border, the Security Council has received several letters from the Government of the Sudan. In those letters, we have regularly informed the Council of an ongoing series of hostile acts, cross-border attacks and violations. On 16 July, those acts culminated in Chad's carrying out air raids inside Sudanese territory. We reported that action to the Council last week. I would like to reaffirm to the Council that the Government of the Sudan has had enough and is running out of patience. We are doing our best to continue to act rationally and to exercise self-restraint in the face of the transgressions of our neighbour Chad. However, patience has its limits. The Sudanese Government would also like to reaffirm that it will continue to assert its full, indivisible and legitimate right to deal with those acts of aggression and violations and to respond to them in a way that ensures that they will not be repeated and that preserves the security and safety of the citizens of the Sudan.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the complete commitment of the Sudanese Government to unlimited cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union in the deployment of the Hybrid Operation and in establishing lasting peace in Darfur as soon as possible. As we have always affirmed to the Council, achieving a lasting and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Darfur is of the utmost priority for the Government of the Sudan.

Darfur is a historic part of the Sudan. The people of Darfur are dear to the hearts of the Sudanese people; indeed, they are part of the Sudanese people. Therefore, we care deeply about their safety and security and about ensuring that they have access to assistance and can return to their villages and homes in order to resume their ordinary lives.

We renew our appeal to the Security Council to throw its full weight behind the political process and to support this operation and this process in every possible way in order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Darfur conflict. Thus, we can close this chapter of Sudanese history forever.

**The President**: I now call on the representative of Sweden.

**Mr. Lidén** (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro and the member of the European Economic Area Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

The suffering in Darfur has been allowed to go on for too long, and a political settlement is desperately needed. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which is at the heart of our common efforts to alleviate the suffering, cannot be a substitute for a political process; nor can it impose peace. It is up to the parties themselves to take concrete steps towards a political solution to the crisis.

UNAMID fulfils a central role in the efforts to provide protection and security and to facilitate humanitarian access in Darfur. It is encouraging that UNAMID is expected to approach its full strength by the end of the year. The current gaps between deployment figures and objectives are hampering the mission's ability to carry out its mandate. Also, we must ensure that the mission is adequately equipped to carry out its priority tasks of protecting civilians and providing security for effective humanitarian action.

The European Union notes the improved cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan through the Tripartite Mechanism. However, obstacles remain that hamper the effectiveness of UNAMID — for instance, with regard to freedom of movement, administrative hurdles in getting customs clearance for critical equipment, and visas for UNAMID staff. At present, nearly 100 nationals of the European Union are waiting for their visas to be able to work for UNAMID. I took note of what the representative of the Sudan said regarding this issue, but I wish to reiterate that the Government of the Sudan has the responsibility to remove those obstacles and ensure that agreements are implemented at the local level.

We are faced with a critical humanitarian situation that may further deteriorate during the rainy season. The Government of the Sudan and all parties to the conflict must respect and adhere to international humanitarian law and ensure safe and unhindered access to people in need of humanitarian assistance. The Government's decision in March to expel a number of non-governmental organizations has hampered the ability to provide humanitarian assistance to the population in need in Darfur.

The European Union takes note of reports that a small number of internally displaced persons have started to return to their villages. It is important to ensure that such returns take place in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner, with assistance and protection in place, and to monitor these returns.

The European Union strongly supports the joint mediation efforts of the African Union and the United Nations, under the leadership of Mr. Djibrill Bassolé, for a sustainable cessation of hostilities. We regard the multi-track approach of the mediation — which also engages civil society in Darfur — as essential. We call on the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Government to honour their commitments as set out in the Doha Agreement of Goodwill.

There can be no sustainable peace without justice. The European Union's position on the International Criminal Court is well known. The Court and its key role in the promotion of international justice have our full support. The European Union urges the Government of the Sudan and all other parties to the conflict to cooperate fully with the Court, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1593 (2005).

The national elections next year provide an opportunity for the Sudan to lay down a political path for the future. Peaceful, transparent and credible elections are fundamental to the consolidation of democracy. UNAMID has a role in assisting the United Nations Mission in the Sudan in preparing for and organizing the elections. The European Union welcomes the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the determination of the boundaries of the Abyei area. We call on the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to cooperate fully in its implementation.

The dynamics of the region continue to be marked by instability. The European Union military operation in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic, deployed in 2008 and transferred to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad in March 2009, should be seen in that context. The European Union, the Security Council and others have called on the Sudan and Chad to respect and fully implement their mutual commitments.

Recurrent cross-border attacks seem to make the agreements meaningless. Both countries need to show clear political will to resolve their outstanding issues.

The bringing of peace to Darfur is long overdue. In order to promote progress, all relevant actors within the international community need to pull in the same direction. The aim should be to impress on the parties the need for flexibility in the search for peace. Ultimately, however, the responsibility lies with the parties themselves. It is time for them to show concrete and serious political will and a commitment to peace.

**The President**: I now give the floor to Under-Secretary-General Le Roy to make his concluding remarks.

**Mr. Le Roy** (*spoke in French*): Given the lateness of the hour, I shall be brief. I should just like to highlight a few points that were raised and several questions that were asked.

First of all, we are satisfied to see that there is a consensus on the two principal objectives: the protection of civilians and support for humanitarian access to benefit those most in need of it. I believe that that will be reflected in the draft resolution that the Council will adopt shortly. Nevertheless, on the second point, humanitarian access, I wish to stress that the humanitarians with whom I recently met mentioned difficulties related to the risk of kidnapping in particular. As members are aware, there are currently three cases of kidnapping, concerning three different non-governmental organizations. Thus, necessarily, the access of humanitarian workers to the most remote places is sometimes difficult. Obviously, when we have our full capacity, we will be able to help them more, but this is a difficulty I wanted to highlight.

Secondly, with regard to the political process — which was frequently mentioned — we thank everyone for their support for Mr. Bassolé and his work. Indeed, there was praise for the efforts of Qatar; for the efforts of Libya, which have also made it possible to bring together a number of the rebel groups; and for the efforts of Egypt, which is once again contributing to the peace process, whose discussions will be continuing, for the moment, in Doha, Qatar. Obviously, we are pleased that all of those initiatives are coming together.

I have noted — and I think it is important to note — that the efforts of all those who have influence over the rebel groups are important if this dialogue is to be inclusive. In particular, we know very well that, despite all the attempts made, Mr. Abdul Wahid's movement refuses to participate in the negotiations. I believe it is important that pressure continue to be exerted on him to join the negotiations, as other rebel groups have done.

The regional dimension was brought up several times. With regard to Chad and the Sudan, the United Nations obviously continues to call for maximum restraint and to urge that no intervention take place from across the border.

Concerning the capacities and the deployment of the mission — which were frequently referred to — I should just like to make several clarifications and to emphasize that 12 of the 18 battalions are already in place and five others have already begun to arrive: a second Ethiopian battalion, a second Egyptian battalion and battalions from South Africa, Tanzania and Burkina Faso. Some of them have already arrived, and the rest will arrive in the coming weeks and months. The same is true for the police units.

There was also a question about capacity, apart from numbers. It is true that some 103 Canadian armoured personnel carriers (APCs) were recently withdrawn and that 62 Nigerian APCs remain at Port Sudan. At the recent Tripartite Committee meeting, the Sudanese authorities promised to lift all customs restrictions on those APCs, but as we speak they remain at Port Sudan. I appeal to the Sudanese authorities to expedite their release, which would be very important for the mission's capacity.

The Tripartite Committee has also considered the question of visas. Let me review the figures we have. Just before the Tripartite Committee meeting, 961 visas had been issued. Two days ago, another 120 were issued; the backlog consists of 327 visas — 197 for police, 47 for observers and the remainder for international staff. As to the timeframe for those 327 visas, we had fresh assurances from the Sudanese Government at the Tripartite Committee meeting that they would expedite the visa-issuance process. In the light of all the nationalities involved, it is very important that no distinction be made among nationalities so that the deployment of all UNAMID personnel — civil, military and police — can take place as soon as possible.

Mr. Mbeki's report was also mentioned. Let me clarify: Mr. Mbeki has indicated that his report would be available in September, and it will then be possible to comment on it.

The representative of Austria asked about the possibility of more border monitoring. For now, from the standpoint of United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and UNAMID, that was not a direct part of our mandate; also, the border is extremely long. We do not think that either MINURCAT or UNAMID has sufficient capacity to monitor the border properly. We know too that both the Chadian and the Sudanese authorities see this as an issue of national sovereignty. I do not see how UNAMID and MINURCAT could carry out strict monitoring of the border.

On the other hand, on something that is indeed part of our mandate, we are increasing patrols along the border to avert the risk of incidents. But, again, we do not have the capacity for complete border monitoring, and politically speaking it is not the desire of either the Sudanese or the Chadian authorities.

Let me conclude by thanking the Council once again for the support expressed today for UNAMID.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Le Roy for his responses and clarifications.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.*

United Nations

S/PV.6171

# Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

## 6171st meeting

Monday, 27 July 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Rugunda | (Uganda) |
| *Members*: | Austria | Mr. Mayr-Harting |
| | Burkina Faso | Mr. Koudougou |
| | China | Mr. Liu Zhenmin |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. Urbina |
| | Croatia | Mr. Vilović |
| | France | Mr. Lacroix |
| | Japan | Mr. Okuda |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Shalgham |
| | Mexico | Mr. Heller |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Churkin |
| | Turkey | Mr. Çorman |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Quarrey |
| | United States of America | Mr. Wolff |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Le Luong Minh |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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09-42432 (E)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

## Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

## The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

**The President**: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Bangladesh, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Weissbrod (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.*

**The President**: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 22 July 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2009/380 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council which will be held on Monday, 27 July 2009, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.*

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I extend a warm welcome to Mr. Fernandez-Taranco.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, to whom I now give the floor.

**Mr. Fernandez-Taranco**: It is a pleasure for me to brief the Council for the first time as Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Since the Council was last briefed by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, on 23 June 2009 (see S/PV.6150), there have been concerted efforts by the international community to create the conditions for the prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations to reach the end goal of a two-State solution.

On 26 June, the Secretary-General joined other members of the Quartet at a meeting in Trieste, which was followed by a meeting with Foreign Ministers of the Follow-up Committee of the League of Arab States on the Arab Peace Initiative. The Quartet underscored that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one that ends the occupation that begin in 1967 and fulfils the aspirations of both parties for independent homelands though two States for two peoples: Israel and an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. All Quartet members affirmed their determination to continue actively and vigorously to seek a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

At Trieste, United States Special Envoy George Mitchell briefed both the Quartet and the Arab foreign ministers on the United States intensive efforts with all parties throughout the region. He stressed that the objective was peace and not yet another process. I am sure that all Council members are aware that Senator Mitchell will be visiting the region for the fifth time later this week, as are a number of senior United States officials. The Quartet envoys will also meet in Jerusalem at the end of this month to actively follow up with the parties to promote the implementation of Quartet positions and formulate recommendations for Quartet action.

There was strong agreement among Quartet members that both Israel and the Palestinians should implement their obligations under the Road Map, and they urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth. I regret to report that illegal settlement activity is continuing across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and that there was no evacuation of settlement outposts during the reporting period. The situation in East Jerusalem is of particular concern due to the developments on the ground, especially indications of new settlement construction and house demolitions.

The international community expressed its concern following the Jerusalem municipality planning committee's approval of the construction of 20 new housing units on the site of the Shepherd Hotel in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. On 19 July, in the Wadi Joz neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, at the homes of two families that have received eviction orders, Special Coordinator Serry met with representatives of the European Union Troika and other members of the international community in order to express their concern at the plight of the families and at the prospect of new settlement construction in East Jerusalem. The homes are part of a neighbourhood of 26 Palestinian refugee families that all the face the threat of eviction.

In a significant development yesterday, settlers accompanied by Israeli security forces took physical possession of a house in another area of Sheikh Jarrah. Demolition orders for Palestinian construction without a permit were carried out against three Palestinian homes during the reporting period and a further 13 new orders were issued. Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem remain closed by Israeli order, and on 15 July a community centre in East Jerusalem was closed. These unilateral actions in highly sensitive areas of East Jerusalem increase tensions and undermine confidence in the basis for the two-State solution. The position of the Secretary-General is clear — the future of Jerusalem remains a matter for final status negotiations between the parties.

In the reporting period, there were 51 incidents in which 19 Palestinians were injured and property was vandalized by settlers. Two Israelis were also injured in these incidents. On 20 July, settlers injured two Palestinians and set fire to agricultural land in the village of Burin. There continues to be inadequate enforcement of the rule of law on violent settlers.

This reporting period marks five years since an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice stated that construction of the wall within occupied Palestinian territory is contrary to international law. The construction of the barrier has compounded movement restrictions in the West Bank, and its planned route includes some 9.5 per cent of the area of the West Bank. Approximately 58 per cent of the barrier in its current planned route has been completed, and construction is ongoing.

The Quartet principals agreed that transformative change on the ground should form an integral and essential part of the agenda for peace. In this respect, there were some improvements in the West Bank in the reporting period. Israel has implemented a number of measures to ease movement between Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah and Jericho. Initial field observations indicate that these measures have significantly reduced the amount of time required for Palestinians to access these cities.

The Government of Israel has also announced that the hours for commercial crossing at the Allenby Bridge to Jordan will be increased and that it will promote the development of three key industrial zones in Bethlehem, Jenin and Jericho. These welcome steps by Israel, if sustained and expanded, would have a significant impact on Palestinian freedom of movement and on economic development.

There are now a total of 613 closure obstacles within the West Bank. This figure has been jointly confirmed for the first time following cooperation by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Central Command and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, including detailed cross-checking and a series of joint field trips.

In a difficult context, the Palestinian Authority has continued to pursue an ambitious reform agenda. From the establishment of a national credit bureau to the modernization of the legal framework for investment, a number of measures are being implemented to strengthen the foundations for socio-economic sustainability. I reiterate the call of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and the Quartet for robust and sustained financial support for the Palestinian Authority.

However, the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority remains dire. The International Monetary Fund estimates that $900 million in external financing are still needed for the remainder of the year, including $300 million to respond to needs in Gaza. It is essential that donor countries fulfil all pledges made at Paris in December 2007 and Sharm el-Sheikh in March this year.

As the Quartet also noted in its meeting in Trieste, the Palestinian Authority has made important steps to reform its security sector. Members of the judicial police completed a training course on 5 July, and the renovation of prisons is under way in several West Bank cities. Five police stations are also being constructed in Jenin governorate. Palestinian forces are now free to operate at night in four West Bank cities following improved coordination with Israel.

The situation was generally calm in the West Bank and there were no fatalities recorded during the reporting period, although 19 Palestinians and 10 Israelis were injured. Israeli security forces continued to arrest Palestinians, but in lower numbers than in previous periods. In a disturbing development, on 4 July a Palestinian Authority official reported that Palestinian security forces had uncovered arms, explosives and $8.5 million in cash from Hamas cells in the West Bank. I urge the Palestinian Authority to continue to make every effort to improve law and order and to fight violent extremism, consistent with its Road Map obligations.

The Secretary-General shared with the Quartet his belief that the situation in Gaza is unsustainable and not in the interests of any of those concerned. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) remains the main framework for the way forward in Gaza. The notable and welcome drop in violence reported in the most recent briefing has continued into this reporting period. However, there were four incidents of rockets or mortars being fired into Israel during the past month and nine Israeli army incursions into the Gaza Strip, in which two Palestinian children were killed and seven Palestinians injured. A reported seven Palestinians were killed today when a tunnel used for smuggling collapsed. No mechanism has been put in place to prevent the illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition in Gaza.

I would like to stress that the Quartet called for a sustained reopening of all crossing points to ensure the regular flow of people and humanitarian and commercial goods into Gaza. A few categories of goods, including small quantities of cement and glass, prohibited for import since June 2007, were allowed into Gaza on an exceptional basis during the reporting period. Overall, an average of 78 trucks per days were allowed into Gaza, an increase from approximately 70 trucks per day in June and a marked increase from the 18 trucks per day in November 2008.

However, in May 2007, prior to the imposition of the comprehensive closure regime, 475 trucks per day were entering Gaza as part of normal commerce and trade. About 70 per cent of imports during the reporting period were human and animal food products while most industrial, agricultural and construction materials were either prohibited or severely restricted. No exports were allowed out of Gaza during this period.

Over the past month, the amount of industrial fuel entering Gaza through the crossing points was sufficient to meet approximately 70 per cent of the quantities needed for Gaza power plants to operate at full capacity. Power cuts continued throughout the Gaza Strip, directly affecting most households' ability to refrigerate foods, as well as the provision of essential services like water and sanitation, health care and storage of medicine as well as waste disposal. Due to the lack of materials needed to fix damage sustained to the network during Operation Cast Lead, some 10 per cent of the population in Gaza remained without any electricity at all.

It is important to note that the tunnel economy continues in Gaza, with smuggling providing an increasingly broad range of consumer goods, and of black market petrol in particular. The alternative tunnel network has alleviated some of the shortages, but it cannot be a substitute for a healthy and functioning economy based on the free movement of goods.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has opened more than a 150 summer camps in Gaza which are being attended by over 185,000 children. Under the coordination of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), efforts to clear over 600,000 tons of rubble have begun. In support of UNDP efforts, the United Nations Mine Action Team for Gaza has received its special explosive ordnance disposal equipment but still waits for delivery of special explosives to destroy unexploded ordnance.

No significant amounts of materials for reconstruction have been allowed into Gaza and I reiterate the Secretary-General's position that this situation is completely unacceptable. In Trieste, the Quartet has expressed it support for the United Nations proposal to kick-start early recovery in Gaza by opening the crossings for materials to complete United Nations construction work on housing, health and education facilities suspended since June 2007. We call on Israel for a prompt and positive response to this proposal.

A further, inconclusive round of talks aimed at reconciling Fatah and Hamas was also held in Cairo on 28 June. Egyptian efforts have now been put on hold, at President Abbas's request, to enable Fatah to focus their efforts on their reform efforts at the upcoming Fatah Congress, scheduled for 4 August in Bethlehem. The factions are due to meet again in Cairo on 25 August.

Meanwhile, Hamas continues to assert its control over the Strip and maintains a visible police presence in public places. On 9 July, in a new development for Gazan society, the Hamas Chief Justice in Gaza instituted a rule that women lawyers must wear a traditional gown and head covering in court. Intra-Palestinian relations remain tense and on 21 July, a bomb injured 61 people at a wedding in Khan Younis.

Fatah claims that nearly 200 of its members in Gaza have been detained over the course of the reporting period. Fatah has also expressed its concern that its members in Gaza will be prevented from attending its sixth Congress in Bethlehem.

On 14 July, the new Israeli negotiator met in Cairo with his Egyptian counterpart to discuss prospects for the release of Israeli captive Gilad Shalit in exchange for a number of the 11,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. The International Committee of the Red Cross has still not been granted access to Shalit after his more than three years in captivity.

Justice Goldstone returned to Gaza on 28 June to conduct two days of public hearings with victims and relatives of the Cast Lead Operation. On 6 July, similar hearings were held in Geneva, during which witnesses and victims from the West Bank and southern Israel testified, including Noam Shalit, the father of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. This mission's report will be presented to the Human Rights Council in August, for discussion at the Council's next session in September.

In the region, Arab League foreign ministers met in Cairo on 24 June and welcomed a new beginning for United States relations with the Arab and Muslim world and President Obama's commitment to exert every effort towards comprehensive peace in the region. The foreign ministers emphasized the importance of a complete Israeli settlement freeze and the need to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip as two key elements to create the necessary climate for the resumption of peace negotiations.

The Quartet took note of the Arab League statement and expressed support for dialogue among all States in the region in the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative. The Quartet called on Arab States to take steps to recognize Israel's rightful place in the region, to affirm that violence cannot achieve regional peace and security, and to assist the Palestinian people in building their future State through consistent support for the Palestinian Authority.

The situation in the occupied Syrian Golan remained quiet during the reporting period, although settlement activity continues.

Turning now to Lebanon, allow me to recall that Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain Le Roy, briefed the Council on 23 July on recent violations of resolution 1701 (2006) that had taken place in South Lebanon. Investigations are still ongoing into some of these violations.

In addition, on 8 July, one Lebanese civilian crossed the Blue Line near Sheikh Abbad tomb and was arrested by the IDF. He was handed over to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) the following morning. During the month, Israeli air violations took place almost daily.

In meetings with Lebanese and Israeli officials and political leaders in the past week, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Mr. Michael Williams stressed the seriousness of these recent events and the gravity of the violations to resolution 1701 (2006) that had taken place as well as the need to de-escalate the situation. With Lebanese leaders, he requested that there be no further incursions by Lebanese civilians across the Blue Line. Mr. Williams was reassured by Prime Minister Siniora, Speaker Berri and Prime Minister-designate Hariri that no further demonstrations would take place in the area. A senior member from Hizbullah also gave the same reassurances.

In a further effort to defuse the situation, Mr. Williams visited Israel on 23 July where he raised the question of the newly-erected watchtower in Kfar Shouba and requested that it be removed. An immediate priority is for all parties to refrain from any provocative actions that could spiral into undesirable results.

Even as we await the outcome of the investigation into the recent events, UNIFIL will continue to coordinate closely with the Lebanese armed forces to ensure that the situation in UNIFIL's area of operation remains under control in line with resolution 1701 (2006).

On the Lebanese side, the challenge ahead remains the formation of a new Government after parliamentary elections on 7 June. We hope that ongoing negotiations over the formation of the Government will proceed as expeditiously as possible. The recent incidents in South Lebanon have been a stark reminder of how quickly and dangerously the situation can deteriorate. Despite the seriousness of those incidents, however, we remain hopeful that we can move towards full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and towards greater security and stability in the Middle East.

Now is the time for Israel, the Palestinians and all actors in the region to play their part to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and to create a better future for all in the Middle East. The Quartet will meet on the margins of the General Assembly in New York in September, and there will also be a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. We continue to support the convening of an international conference in Moscow in 2009.

We remain determined to actively and vigorously seek a comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid framework, including the principle of land for peace, the Road Map and agreements previously reached between the parties.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I shall now give the floor to members of Security Council.

**Mr. Shalgham** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my appreciation to Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing, which clearly shows the extent of the deteriorating situation and the danger posed to the occupied Palestinian territories and to security and stability in the region.

Despite the fact that more than six months have elapsed since the Israeli forces perpetrated their massacre in the Gaza Strip and the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), we still cannot see any sign that the occupying authorities intend to change their inhuman behaviour towards the civilians in the Gaza Strip. For the third consecutive year, we see their lack of will to end the siege and the blockade, to open the border crossings closed under a policy of collective punishment that runs counter to all international and humanitarian law, and to desist from committing grave violations in the occupied Palestinian territories, some of which easily qualify as war crimes under international law and international humanitarian law.

Nor do we see any sign of international will to break the world's silence and pressure the occupation authorities to put an end to the suffering of civilians in the Gaza Strip. That silence has encouraged the occupation forces to commit yet more crimes and to intensify their practices, behaving like a State that is above the law.

At this juncture, we would like to commend the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the efforts made by its personnel in the face of threats and danger. We strongly condemn all aggression against its personnel and the false accusations levelled against them by the occupation forces.

Conditions in the West Bank are no better than those in the Gaza Strip, which shows that, despite Israel's allegations and pretexts with regard to the Gaza Strip, Israeli officials have not ceased to declare their intention to continue expanding their settlement activities and to apply policies that seek to rapidly Judaize Jerusalem by confiscating identity cards and land. Meanwhile, the settlers continue their crimes against Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank, which more often than not are committed with the help and support of the occupation forces, which protect them while ignoring the complaints of Palestinian civilians.

Those measures have been intensified by the continued construction of the racist separation wall despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and by blockades of ring roads and the bypass roads that cut across the West Bank. The land that has been taken from the West Bank as a result of the settlements, the ring roads and the separation wall totals 2,703 square kilometres, which constitutes 46 per cent of the whole area of the West Bank. Yet, we still talk about the establishment of a Palestinian State at a time when 46 per cent of the West Bank has been taken by the Israelis and their settlers.

I would like to mention the situation of Palestinian detainees and prisoners, especially women. Here, I refer to the report adopted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which refers to the grave and distressing situation of female Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres. The report says that most of them are exposed to psychological and mental pressure and torture, including insults, beatings, threats and sexual harassment. The report also states that 13 per cent of these female prisoners are under the age of 18.

Any serious effort to achieve peace in the Middle East must start by putting an end to the international silence with regard to Israel. This means that the international community should not fear Israel but should dare to call on it to freeze all settlement activities and to halt and remove all settlements. The Council has been silent, which has encouraged Israel to continue those policies. It has rejected any mention of a racist State, instead talking about a Jewish Israeli State, and it has failed to condemn the enactment of new laws against the Arab people. That threatens a new *Nakba*, lays the groundwork for the transfer and displacement of 1.5 million Palestinians from land occupied in 1948 and denies the right of Palestinian refugees to return under international law and international resolutions.

**Mr. Le Luong Minh** (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his detailed and comprehensive briefing, his first before the Council.

Over the past six months the situation in the Middle East has remained worrisome. Almost no progress has been made on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). Despite an announced ceasefire, incursions by the Israeli armed forces into the occupied Palestinian territory continued; Israeli imposition of restrictions and blockades continued to inflict untold psychological, physical and humanitarian damage upon the very fabric of the civilian population in Gaza and adversely affected reconstruction efforts by United Nations agencies and the international donor community. Israel's increased construction of settlements in the West Bank and its ongoing pursuit of the separation wall threatened to alter the legal status, demographic composition and character of the Palestinian territories before final status negotiations could resume. And Israeli civilians continued to fall victim to rocket attacks.

In the face of that situation, we welcome the intensified diplomatic efforts and the broad consensus among the Quartet, Arab League members, regional countries and the international community at large on the pressing need for early resumption of a fully fledged peace process on all tracks. We also welcome the undertakings of the Palestinian Government to consolidate progress in revitalizing the socio-economic infrastructure, developing an effective security structure and establishing functional institutions for a future State. Those positive developments give us a sense of guarded optimism.

For more than six decades, the Middle East has been suffering from protracted hostilities and has fallen short of achieving a steady state of peace, stability and prosperity. Violence and counter-violence will not contribute to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region which could ensure Israel's security and achievement of the Palestinians' ultimate goal of setting up an independent and viable State of their own. Peaceful settlement of disputes, constructive dialogue and good-faith negotiations can and should be the only option to help bridge the rift and cultivate confidence between the parties, which is so essential after years of disruptive mistrust and confrontation.

Viet Nam continues to support the Road Map, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative, and it calls for strict implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We urge the new Israeli Government to stay the course towards settling the crisis on the basis of a two-State solution, freeze illegal settlement activity, dismantle outposts erected since March 2001, allow unhindered access of humanitarian assistance, open all border crossings and resolve the fate of all Palestinian prisoners. We also urge the Palestinian factions to promote national reconciliation and to rally behind the Palestinian National Authority in preparation for the establishment of a national unity government and future statehood. We commend the role played by the Arab countries in that regard.

To relieve the suffering of the people in Gaza, we call upon the parties concerned to strictly abide by international humanitarian and human rights law and extend necessary cooperation to relief operations being conducted by United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations.

While welcoming the successful conduct of the parliamentary elections in Lebanon early last month, we remain concerned, however, about the recent security incidents in south Lebanon and support the investigation process carried out by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces. At this critical juncture, we underline the importance of maximum restraint among the parties and the assurance of safety and security for United Nations peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and the local population. We urge Israel to cease flights over Lebanese territory and to withdraw from the northern part of Ghajar village and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. We continue to support collective efforts aimed at ensuring full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

**Mr. Okuda** (Japan): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing.

It has been six months since the conflict in Gaza. While there has not been any major outbreak of violence since then, neither has there been any political breakthrough towards lasting peace. We believe that the current situation of no peace, no war is not sustainable. We must do everything possible to realize real peace.

We cannot overstate the importance of the two-State solution. This can only be achieved through negotiation, and violence has no place in the process. Japan strongly supports a comprehensive solution on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid principles, including land for peace, and the Road Map.

In this regard, we reiterate our call on both the Israelis and the Palestinians to fulfil their obligations under the Road Map and refrain from any action that might prejudge the outcome of negotiations. We urge the Israelis to freeze their settlement activities, including so-called natural growth in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In this regard, we are concerned about the project of the construction of Jewish residences in East Jerusalem.

Improving the humanitarian conditions in Gaza continues to be an important priority. We call on the Israelis to further cooperate with the international efforts in that regard by keeping the crossings open continuously to secure the smooth movement of the relevant people and goods. We also call on all parties to fully implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) to resolve the issues surrounding Gaza. To increase this momentum, Japan has been making efforts to alleviate the devastated humanitarian conditions. This month, we have decided to provide a total of $10 million in assistance, including food aid through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Food Programme and the project for prevention of infectious diseases through UNICEF.

We take note of the removal of some of the restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank by the Government of Prime Minister Netanyahu. We encourage the Israelis and the Palestinians to strengthen their security cooperation, which will enable further relaxation of restrictions on movement and access.

Palestinian reconciliation is essential. We support Palestinian unity under the leadership of President Abbas and call on the Palestinians to work vigorously to achieve it. In this context, we hope that the Fatah Congress will be a success. We fully support Egypt's efforts and ask that any country in the region with influence cooperate in this endeavour.

Japan has consistently provided assistance to the Palestinians since the Oslo Accord of 1993. Building a viable economy for the Palestinians is an indispensable component of a future Palestinian State. Japan will continue to do as much as possible in that regard.

We welcome and support the renewed and intensified efforts of the Obama Administration of the United States to achieve comprehensive peace in the region. The serious efforts of the United States are creating an opportunity, which we have not seen in some time, to realize the long-sought goal of achieving comprehensive peace among all parties in the region, including Syria and Lebanon. However, we cannot let the United States alone shoulder all of the responsibilities. The parties themselves, as well as the international community, must also shoulder their responsibilities if we are to achieve peace.

We fully support the Arab Peace Initiative, which can be a basis for a comprehensive peace in the region, and believe that all the Arab States can play a more active role in ameliorating the atmosphere surrounding the peace talks. We hope that they will take tangible steps towards that end.

People in the region have seen various peace initiatives come and go. We must not let the people feel apathetic towards these renewed efforts. We should seize this opportunity as if it were our last. Japan is determined to help both parties reinvigorate the peace process. Ambassador Yutaka Iimura, the newly appointed Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East peace process, will work with the parties to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region.

**Mr. Heller** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing today on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Israel for being with us as well as the Permanent Observer of the Palestinian Authority.

The open debate today on the situation in the Middle East is taking place within the framework of important diplomatic initiatives aimed at providing a new impetus to the peace process. After the conflict and political transition period which characterized the region during the first half of this year, the time has come for dialogue and negotiation.

Mexico hopes that during the second half of 2009 tangible progress will be achieved in the peace process, which will lead us towards the objective that has been endorsed by the international community — the establishment of a Palestinian State living in peace with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders.

That is why we welcome the diplomatic initiative undertaken by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, in the Middle East, as well as the important message he gave during his recent talk in Cairo on 4 June.

We have also taken note of the fact that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has acknowledged the need for the establishment of a Palestinian State. However, in our view, the significant preconditions and in some cases very restrictive conditions that have been imposed for achieving this objective only run the risk of further complicating the negotiation process and a future settlement. We hope that this initiative will be a first step in the right direction, which will allow all political sectors in Israel to be involved in the negotiating process.

Similarly, we welcome the statement made by the Quartet in Trieste on 26 June, in which the determination of the international community to support the parties in the negotiation process and to implement the resulting agreement was reiterated. Mexico supports this statement which has a renewed appeal to the parties to comply with their obligations under the road map and to work together for a two-State solution.

We hope that these diplomatic initiatives will generate the right conditions for the holding, at an appropriate time, of an international conference in Moscow that will enable us to consolidate the objective of a final outcome in the Middle East peace process.

Mexico has participated actively in international efforts for peace, and we would join any initiative of this sort.

Meeting the objectives of the peace process should not remain wishful thinking. The critical situation for the people in the region as well as the constant tensions among actors who have been involved in this conflict for decades demands that progress be achieved as soon as possible.

A few days ago, we received new reports of serious incidents along the border between Gaza and Israel, which confirms the fact that tensions and insecurity continue to be present following the military operations that took place at the beginning of this year. We condemn these acts of violence, in particular the acts and attacks against the civilian population, and once again we urge all actors to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law at all times.

The living conditions in the Gaza Strip have continued to worsen due to the fact that humanitarian assistance has had difficulty gaining access and there have been ongoing restrictions on the provision of building materials, fuel and cash. According to figures provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the goods entering Gaza in recent weeks totalled only one fifth of those for the corresponding period in 2007.

This situation is not acceptable. It contributes to the worsening of the humanitarian situation and a sense of frustration and injustice among the population, which helps to promote extremism and violence. The restrictions on Gaza lead to illicit trafficking in construction materials, fuel and food, and this in turn creates a vicious circle, opening the door for illicit trafficking in weapons and jeopardizing security throughout the region.

We therefore continue to insist on the need to establish an international monitoring mechanism that will guarantee a lasting ceasefire, the opening of border crossings and the monitoring of illicit trafficking in weapons, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009). We support all initiatives aimed at establishing a mechanism of this type, the only way to ensure progressive normalization of the situation in the Gaza Strip.

This normalization also requires ongoing efforts aimed at achieving intra-Palestinian reconciliation, efforts which have received encouragement from the Government of Egypt. We regret the fact that the recent rounds of negotiations have not led to significant progress and we hope that the various factions will renew their commitment to reconciliation in order to promote the peace dialogue with Israel. We also urge Hamas and all Palestinian militia to renounce the use of violence in order to create a climate of trust that will be conducive to the peace process. Extremism should not be fought solely with weapons. We also need to provide, with due caution, a space for dialogue and negotiation.

Only through the establishment of a unified democratic Palestinian Government committed to the peace process, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative will it be possible to set the foundation for a negotiating process that will lead to a lasting solution to the conflict.

The situation prevailing in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank continues to be a cause for concern. While we welcome the lifting of some restrictions on the movement of individuals in the West Bank, in particular in the Hawara outpost in the Nablus region, the population and the Palestinian economy continue to suffer from numerous restrictions imposed by the Israel Defense Forces.

The progressive professionalization of the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank shows that there is a commitment to peace and to regional stability. This commitment must be accompanied by concrete actions that will improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Only in this way can any serious progress be made towards peace.

Moreover, the commitments established under the road map on the policy of colonization and settlement, as well on the practice of the destruction of homes and expropriation in East Jerusalem, have yet to be fulfilled. Today, the press has reported that there are more than 300,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and that population continues to increase significantly. This situation cannot continue. It is a negative element in the negotiating process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and in the establishment of lasting peace. We recall that, in accordance with the principles of the road map and international law, all Israeli settlement practices in the occupied territories, including those that are qualified as natural growth, must be halted as soon as possible. The International Court of Justice decision should be followed with regard to the building of the wall in occupied Palestinian territory, which runs counter to international law.

It is essential for efforts aimed at achieving regional peace to be pursued. A few weeks ago, we welcomed the peaceful and transparent holding of parliamentary elections in Lebanon on 7 June. The successful conclusion of this electoral process demonstrates the commitment of all Lebanese political actors to the Doha agreements and to the process of national reconciliation.

We also welcome the normalization of political and diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria, which will make it possible to enhance the dialogue between those two neighbouring countries in order to resolve pending issues and ultimately strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Despite these important achievements, we note with concern the events that took place a few days ago south of the Litani River in the zone of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in particular an explosion in a weapons depot in the area of Khirbat Salim. The existence of weapons south of the Litani River that do not belong to the Lebanese Armed Forces is unacceptable and a violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

We urge the Government of Lebanon, in cooperation with UNIFIL, to take the necessary measures to ensure that these types of incidents do not recur. Similarly, we reiterate our appeal that Lebanon, Israel and all other parties involved in this conflict comply with the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), in particular those referring to the arms embargo and the complete disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, with the sole objective of strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the country.

We attach particular importance to UNIFIL's ability to carry out its mandate unhindered and unrestricted in any way. We also reiterate our appeal to Israel and Syria to resume indirect talks under the auspices of Turkey, as such talks could be very beneficial to the population and security of both States.

The remaining challenges to resolving the conflict in the Middle East in a definitive manner are numerous. However, we trust that this is the right time to address those challenges progressively. The support of the international community is therefore essential but not sufficient. First and foremost, we need the resolve and commitment of the actors directly involved in the peace process. We therefore urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to undertake a constructive dialogue without preconditions and on the basis of prior international obligations and agreements. Only in this way will we achieve the peace so hoped for by the people embroiled for 60 years in this conflict, which has had an impact not only on regional security but also, to a great extent, international stability and their future.

**Mr. Vilović** (Croatia): Allow me to begin by welcoming Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco and thanking him for his candid briefing.

Our meeting today comes at the end of an intense transition period that has witnessed important political statements, meetings and events, bringing new opportunities and challenges.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union, but allow me to add a few comments.

Croatia sees this meeting as representing hopeful momentum towards taking concrete steps to achieve a two-State solution and regional peace. We are encouraged by the vigorous engagement of the United States Administration, which has created the impetus for arriving at a lasting solution in the Middle East, including through the personal determination of President Obama and today's activities of the special envoy, Senator Mitchell. We also welcome the commitment of Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to the two-State solution. Croatia believes that our collective interest is to remain focused on a shared, clear and fundamental objective — the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel, and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

For the international community, this means focusing on creating conditions conducive to the peace process and encouraging the parties to resume negotiations as soon as possible, with a view to settling all permanent status issues on the basis of the two-State solution, mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement and terror, and respect for previous agreements and understandings. There is no other way for the two parties to realize their legitimate aspirations.

This means respecting the integrity of the bilateral negotiations while also recognizing the regional dimension of the process. We value the efforts of the responsible regional partners to secure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the Arab Peace Initiative.

Croatia understands that the political and diplomatic process remains inextricably linked to the situation on the ground. We understand that it may be illusory to expect credible progress without positively changing the realities on the ground, or without properly addressing the obstacles. That is why it is crucial for both parties to implement their obligations under the Road Map and to refrain from provocative acts or unilateral actions that could prejudge the outcome of the negotiations or erode trust and confidence in the peace process. This makes it necessary to end settlement activities, dismantle all outposts and refrain from any unilateral action.

Division among the Palestinians and their inadequate institutional and security capacity, as well as the regional environment, are causes for concern. Croatia appreciates the mediation efforts of Egypt and the Arab League in overcoming Palestinian divisions.

Another ongoing cause for concern is the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Croatia continues to believe that this crisis ultimately requires a political solution. The controlled and sustained opening of border crossings, matched with appropriate monitoring arrangements, is essential for securing adequate supplies of food, medicine and cash, as well as reconstruction and economic recovery. In that context, the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) is critical to obtaining a durable solution to the Gaza crisis and responding to legitimate Israeli security concerns. Sustained and indiscriminate rocket attacks on southern Israel and the ongoing arms smuggling cannot be tolerated.

Croatia understands that the renewed push for peace demands that both parties take decisive steps. The Palestinian Authority needs to continue its efforts to consolidate progress in developing an effective and reformed security sector and functioning institutions. Israel must be reassured that Palestinian statehood will not come at the expense of its legitimate security concerns. Both parties must take credible steps to overcome the disruptive effects of the crisis in confidence and implement their obligations under the Road Map.

There also needs to be improvement in the lives of ordinary Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza, including by promoting Palestinian economic development based on the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access. We are pleased to note the recent trend of economic and security revival in the West Bank, and welcome steps taken by Israel towards removing some of the road blocks in the West Bank. Israel and Arab countries in turn would need to undertake confidence-building measures. We share the view that the comprehensive peace process needs to see progress both on the Israeli-Palestinian and on the Syrian-Lebanese tracks, including by preparing the Moscow conference.

Allow me to briefly turn to Lebanon. Croatia congratulates the people of Lebanon on holding free, fair and peaceful elections — a remarkable demonstration of their yearning for democracy and normalcy. With the process of the formation of a Government under way, which we hope will continue in a spirit of dialogue and responsibility, it remains crucial, as the recent incident in South Lebanon clearly demonstrated, for all political actors to remain committed to the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Taif Accords and to address the question of disarming Hizbullah, which remains of central importance to peace and stability in Lebanon and the region.

**Mr. Mayr-Harting** (Austria): I too would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his update on recent developments in the Middle East. We welcome the presence at the table of the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, but let me add the following points.

We welcome the recent intensified efforts by the international community to break the deadlock in the Middle East peace process. As suggested by Mr. Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, the

Security Council can assume a key role with its steadfast support for the peace process and its final objective, namely, a permanent two-State solution.

We would like to recall the European Council conclusions of June and point out that, beyond its continued political and economic support to the peace process, the European Union is ready to contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, while also addressing regional, economic and security dimensions.

We welcome the determination of the Quartet, as expressed at its recent meeting, to seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab Peace Initiative and the decision of the Arab League of 24 June, underscoring the commitment to comprehensive peace on all tracks, are also important contributions to the Middle East Peace process.

We welcome the talks under way between the United States and all parties in the region aimed at creating conditions for the prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations without preconditions on all permanent status issues.

That Prime Minister Netanyahu has expressed a commitment to a peace agreement that includes the establishment of a Palestinian State is a welcome initial move. But that needs to be followed up by concrete steps, such as a revision of Israeli settlement policies, with an immediate end to settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem and including natural growth and the dismantlement of all outposts erected since March 2001. Furthermore, we call upon the Government of Israel to refrain from unilateral actions in East Jerusalem, including the demolition of houses and evictions.

While we acknowledge the progress made by the Palestinian Authority in security sector reform, efforts to fight violent extremism and to strengthen the rule of law need to be stepped up. That includes reliable long-term safeguards against renewed rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian reconciliation is vital. More decisive efforts towards a unified political leadership by all political representatives of the Palestinians and a common renouncement of violence are required. The delay of the Cairo talks, already in their seventh round, is therefore a source of concern. We hope that Palestinian leaders will work towards the prevention of even deeper separation between the West Bank and Gaza, thereby preserving chances for the unity of the future Palestinian State.

Half a year after the escalation of the Gaza conflict, we again reiterate the importance of the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). Ensuring open access to the Gaza Strip is indispensable for improving the intolerable humanitarian situation of the people in Gaza and for the start of reconstruction efforts.

Controlled but comprehensive supply of the Gaza Strip would discourage tunnel trafficking and allow for effective measures against the smuggling of weapons through the tunnels, thereby also contributing to the security of Israel. Austria continues to hold the view that rebuilding Gaza also requires rebuilding trust and respect for the rule of law. That includes a thorough investigation of all allegations of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and a follow-up to the findings of such investigations.

Concerning the situation in the West Bank, we strongly encourage the continued and sustained easing of restrictions on movement. As Prime Minister Netanyahu has stressed, a strong Palestinian economy will strengthen peace. We therefore hope that that objective will be supported by a rapid and ambitious programme of removal of barriers to freedom of movement and economic activity in the West Bank.

Regarding Lebanon, we are very concerned about ongoing developments in southern Lebanon. That is an issue that we brought up in the Council earlier on. It is clear that the most recent events constitute a violation of resolution 1701 (2006). The explosion of an arms cache and the incidents that followed have once more revealed the general fragility of the situation. Thus, we reiterate the need for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by all sides. We encourage all sides to engage in visible steps in that regard.

Austria congratulates Lebanon on the successful holding of parliamentary elections. We hope that the process of the formation of a new Government under Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri will see steady progress. We wish to stress the importance of close cooperation by any new Government with the main constitutional bodies as an important step towards further consolidating Lebanon's democracy.

In conclusion, let me express once again Austria's conviction that it is essential to make progress on all tracks of the Middle East peace process. Only a comprehensive peace will be a durable peace.

**Mr. Wolff** (United States of America): Let me also thank the Secretary-General for his report, as well as Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing. We welcome him to his new position and congratulate him on his first appearance before the Council.

The United States is firmly committed to working towards a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, including a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. President Obama is personally engaged in that effort, and he will continue to lead it.

In consultation with States in the region and beyond, the United States is working vigorously to create the conditions for the prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts. My Government's Special Envoy, Senator George Mitchell, is again in the region today, consulting with his counterparts about the way forward. As Special Envoy Mitchell emphasized yesterday, comprehensive peace is the only way to guarantee stability, security and prosperity for all States in the region. We will need Arabs and Israelis alike to work with us to succeed.

As we move forward, we should recall that all parties have responsibilities. With Israel and the Palestinians, those responsibilities centre on fulfilling the Road Map commitments. With Israel, our focus is on settlements, outposts and movement in the West Bank. With the Palestinians, our focus includes their commitment to provide effective security in areas under their control, to continue important security and other reforms and to end incitement. With the Arab States, we are seeking increased support for the Palestinian Authority and forward movement on their offer to normalize relations with Israel, made in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. As a concrete gesture, we urge the leaders of Arab States to do their part by taking meaningful steps towards normalization.

We have been working intensively with the Israeli Government to deal with the issue of settlement activity. For decades, United States Administrations have had a consistent position on that subject. While we recognize that those decisions are difficult, we are asking Israel to uphold commitments it has made, including to stop settlements and to dismantle outposts.

At the same time, Israel is taking positive steps to ease the living conditions of Palestinians and to create circumstances that can help lead to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. Over the past several months, Israel has removed, or eased conditions at, several key checkpoints in the West Bank. The Israeli military has also withdrawn its troops to the outskirts of four cities. If expanded and sustained, these changes should have a significant impact on Palestinian freedom of movement, economic development and growth and overall quality of life. We expect that this process will continue.

These positive developments make it all the more imperative that we work together to support the Palestinian Authority and its non-partisan, transparent programmes that aim to improve the lives of ordinary Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have endorsed the Palestinian Authority's 2009 budget and the accounting controls it has put in place.

But the Palestinian Authority's domestic revenue is still not enough to cover all its operational expenses and to continue security and institutional reforms. According to IMF projections for 2009, the Palestinian Authority needs $120 million each month in donor assistance to cover its operational expenses. Yet donor support has failed to keep up with the Palestinian Authority's needs, falling almost $50 million short on an average monthly basis during the first quarter of the year. Thus, the Palestinian Authority is accumulating arrears and unsustainable levels of debt to private banks, threatening its financial stability.

On 24 July, Secretary of State Clinton announced the transfer of $200 million in direct budget support from the United States to the Palestinian Authority. We call on other countries that wish to see a strong, viable Palestinian State to join us in providing such concrete support to the Palestinian Authority.

On the security front, the Palestinian Authority is taking its responsibilities for security sector reform seriously. To date, 1,998 Palestinian security personnel have completed training in Jordan and have been deployed to the West Bank. Another full battalion of roughly 500 men will begin training in August. These efforts must continue in conjunction with the invigorated efforts to promote the rule of law, so that

Palestinians can live in the secure environment they have long deserved and so that they can demonstrate that Palestine will be a responsible State in the region.

The unimpeded distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment, remains a pressing issue. As Secretary Clinton has said, progress towards the goals we seek is more likely to grow out of opportunity than out of futility, out of hope than out of misery. By ensuring the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, we aim to foster the conditions in which a Palestinian State can be fully realized: a State that is a responsible partner, a State at peace with Israel and with its Arab neighbours, a State accountable to its people, a State that Palestinians everywhere can be proud of, a State that is respected around the world. The United States continues to urge the Government of Israel to ensure that United Nations and other humanitarian agencies are able to go about their work.

Moreover, all United Nations Member States, including those in the region, must work to ensure the end of illicit smuggling of arms and ammunition into Gaza, lest Hamas restock its arsenal and spark further conflict. My Government therefore supports reopening Gaza's border crossings in a controlled manner, with an appropriate monitoring regime involving international and Palestinian Authority participation.

Arab States also have responsibilities, in particular to support the legitimate Palestinian Authority and help President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, thus demonstrating that negotiations, not the terrorism and violence chosen by Hamas, are the path to an independent and viable State.

President Obama has also called for Arab States to take clear and unambiguous steps towards normalization with Israel in the context of significant Israeli actions, in order to advance our shared goal of comprehensive peace in the Middle East and stability for all the region's people. The Arab Peace Initiative, supported by the 57 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, was a positive step, but more is needed. Those who embraced the proposal should taken meaningful steps now, and that includes contributing to a more positive international backdrop to our efforts for peace in international forums, including here at the United Nations. We will be looking for early signs of such a change.

The Quartet remains the most effective instrument for marshalling the international community's diplomatic efforts in support of Middle East peace. In Trieste last month, the Quartet underscored that the only viable solution to the conflict is one that fulfils the aspirations of both parties for independent homelands: two States for two peoples living side by side in peace and security. It also welcomed Prime Minister Netanyahu's and President Abbas's commitment to the two-State solution. The Quartet voiced its support for Palestinian unity in pursuit of such a solution. It called on all Palestinians to commit themselves to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements, as well as to the obligation to facilitate the reconstruction of Gaza and the organization of elections.

I should note here that since the most recent Security Council consultation on the Middle East we have marked the third year that Gilad Shalit has been held in captivity by Hamas, in direct contradiction of international law. To compound that grave violation, Hamas has never allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross access to Corporal Shalit. We encourage all efforts to secure Gilad Shalit's immediate release.

Events in Lebanon over the past several weeks have underscored the importance of full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). Implementing those resolutions is the only sure path to protecting Lebanon's sovereignty, stability and independence. As the Council heard last week, on 14 July a series of explosions shook a house in the village of Khirbat Salim, well south of the Litani river. Initial findings point to a large quantity of arms and ammunition being stored there in serious violation of resolution 1701 (2006), with all evidence pointing to Hizbullah. The Khirbat Salim events clearly demonstrate the urgent need to bring arms in Lebanon under legitimate control of the State and the need for the international community to remain fully committed to supporting the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in its mission.

We are deeply concerned about the threat that such weapons pose to the civilian populations in both Israel and Lebanon. By Hizbullah's own admission, it is continuing to rearm. That is a dangerous development which represents a severe violation of a core objective of resolution 1701 (2006), since it was

Hizbullah that launched the 2006 war that neither Israel nor Lebanon sought.

We join the Secretary-General in calling on Hizbullah to disarm and to transform itself into a solely political party. We also call for UNIFIL and the Lebanese Government to act energetically to follow up on information about Hizbullah's weapons stocks and call for full and unimpeded investigation into the explosion of the weapons cache at Khirbat Salim.

Resolving that situation would reassure the Government of Israel that its northern border and citizens are secure. Israel has said that, until it has such assurances, it will persist with its reconnaissance overflights of Lebanon. While we recognize those overflights also as violations of the Blue Line, we understand Israel's justification for them. Simply put, we have not succeeded in ensuring that Lebanon has secured its borders in order to prevent the entry of illegal arms or related materiel. In short, Hizbullah has intentionally perpetuated the threats that lead to these Blue Line violations.

The United States remains firmly committed to supporting UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in their efforts to fully implement the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). We stand firmly in support of Lebanon's State institutions, and that includes providing the Lebanese Armed Forces with support to protect Lebanon and its citizens, pursue international peace and security and implement the resolutions of the Security Council.

**Mr. Lacroix** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing and to welcome him to the Security Council.

Naturally, France endorses the statement to be made by the Permanent Representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

To begin, I would like briefly to refer to the Lebanese dossier before the Security Council. France welcomes the success of the legislative elections held in Lebanon on 7 June, which represents a new, positive step for that country and its democracy. We hope that the renewed dialogue will be continued and help Lebanon to pursue the unity, stability and reform sought by its people.

Recent incidents in southern Lebanon remind us of the importance of the full implementation by all parties of resolution 1701 (2006). We reiterate our full support for the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Any attack on UNIFIL is unacceptable, and it is important and even essential that the parties cooperate fully with the Force.

I turn now to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Rarely if ever has there been such international consensus on the nature of a solution to the conflict — the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State living side by side with Israel within secure and recognized borders. The statements of the Israeli Prime Minister on that specific point represent a first and welcome step, as the ministers for foreign affairs of the European Union stressed on 15 June.

The task now is to determine how successfully to engage the various stages leading to that objective. Those stages are many, difficult to complete and varied. I shall refer to the three principal stages.

First, daily living conditions must be improved so that the people do not lose all hope. That will require the implementation by the parties of their Road Map obligations. In that respect, the Israeli authorities must cease all settlement activity, the destruction of homes and other evictions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The issue of settlements is, of course, critical, and we welcome the stress placed by President Obama on that point. As President Sarkozy has recalled, by complicating the prospects for establishing a Palestinian State, settlement activity does not contribute to Israel's security but will, contrarily, only increase the dangers. The authorities of France and the European Union have sent that very clear message to the Israeli authorities.

The second requisite development on the ground involves freedom of movement and access. That applies not only to Gaza, on which I will have more to say, but also to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The lifting by the Israeli authorities of some major obstacles to movement, in particular in Nablus, is an important move that must be followed up.

All measures aimed at restoring a normal life for the Palestinian people must be encouraged. Beyond their humanitarian and human consequences, such measures will also help the Palestinians and their authorities to meet their responsibility to strengthen the foundations of their future State. In that regard, the Palestinian Authority must pursue its efforts to strengthen the security sector and ensure the rule of law. The pitiless fight against terrorism must also be an ongoing priority.

With regard to the situation in Gaza, the consolidation of the ceasefire, encompassing the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), remains a priority. Resolution 1860 (2009) defined the main parameters of a permanent ceasefire, including the opening of crossings and the establishment of mechanisms to end the smuggling of weapons.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is most disturbing. We call for the immediate opening of checkpoints, in particular to facilitate access for humanitarian assistance and the resumption of economic activity. Beyond the issues of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, we believe that such closures will perpetuate the political status quo in Gaza. In addition to those efforts, we continue firmly to call for the unconditional and immediate release of Gilad Shalit.

My third and final point involves inter-Palestinian reconciliation and the role of neighbouring States. The Palestinians must speak in a single voice if the peace process is to resume. There can be no peace agreement with a single party representing the Palestinian people, or a viable Palestinian State without Gaza. While talks to achieve inter-Palestinian reconciliation face myriad challenges, we continue to support the Egyptian mediation efforts. Of course, the countries of the region have an important role to play. At the appropriate time, we will be prepared to work with a Government of national unity that respects the basic principles of the peace process and agrees to resume negotiations with Israel leading to a two-State solution.

Moreover, we continue to lend our full support to the Arab Peace Initiative, which must be part of a comprehensive and lasting solution in the Middle East. Any step taken or gesture made by States of the region to demonstrate their commitment to lasting peace, which necessarily involves good-neighbourly relations with Israel, is to be encouraged. In the context of the regional approach, we also believe that the time has come to move forward on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the peace process.

The elements to which I have referred will, at this critical juncture for the Middle East, determine progress towards the necessary resumption of negotiations on a peace agreement on the basis of the principle of land for peace, the resolutions of the Security Council and the Arab Peace Initiative. The international community and the Security Council must be fully committed, because the situation in the Middle East is of urgent concern to us all. France and the European Union have repeatedly shown our readiness to assist in facilitating negotiations to the maximum possible extent and to consider guarantees for a possible new agreement. We note with great hope the intentions expressed by the new United States Administration. We must now move tangibly towards peace, and France is resolved to play its full role to that end.

**Mr. Koudougou** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for organizing today's debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, a subject to which we attach great importance.

We also thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his introductory briefing to our discussion, which we hope will contribute to the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution for the entire Middle East.

The evolution of the situation in the Middle East, particularly with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, remains of major concern to the international community, which has undertaken numerous efforts and initiatives to re-establish lasting peace in a region beset by several decades of war that have claimed countless victims. My delegation once again welcomes the efforts made at various levels by the Quartet and a number of countries and organizations to help the parties to relaunch their peace talks, particularly now that recent developments threaten to compromise the fragile progress that has been achieved. These developments include the ongoing Jewish settlement activity in the West Bank and the appalling humanitarian situation that continues to prevail in the Gaza Strip due to the lengthy closure of crossing points, which has hindered the delivery of essential goods and particularly the importation of construction materials into Gaza. All such actions contribute to hindering the momentum of the dialogue resumed at the Annapolis Conference.

At this point, we believe it critical for the parties to commit further, resolutely and unconditionally to open and direct discussions on all issues. In this regard, Burkina Faso welcomes the recent commitments made by the Israeli authorities to launch discussions with a view to achieving peace with the Palestinians and to expand this peace to the regional level.

Likewise, we welcome the public statement made by the Palestinians which states that the Palestinians are ready to resume discussions immediately.

The urgency of the situation calls for direct talks to resume without delay and without conditions. These discussions should respect the spirit and the letter of relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular, the most recent, 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), as well as the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. These undoubtedly constitute the most appropriate political and legal frameworks for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the conflict in the Middle East in general.

My delegation believes in the advent of a stable, peaceful and prosperous Middle East, with the full participation of an independent and viable Palestinian State, with secure and internationally recognized borders, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel, which, itself, would live in security with all its neighbours.

In our view, this is the only solution for putting an end to this regional conflict. To achieve this, the first step to take, as we emphasized during the most recent ministerial debate, held in May under the Russian presidency, is still the establishment of a genuine climate of confidence through the adoption of the following measures: an end to extremist rhetoric from all sides; an end to Israel's construction of the separation wall; an end to its policies of colonization and settlements; the guarantee of humanitarian access by opening passage points; and an end to the firing of rockets by Hamas and all its other forms of violence in Israeli territory.

In parallel, the Palestinians should succeed in restoring their unity to give themselves a chance to build a stable and prosperous State. We reiterate our thanks to Egypt for its commitment and efforts to help them do so, and we encourage the international community to continue to provide support to this end.

The donor conference held in Sharm El-Sheikh on 2 March of this year was an opportunity to make commitments on essential issues. We hope that these commitments will be kept.

In my delegation's view, humanitarian aid must be able, without hindrance, to reach Gaza and all the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, in order to ease the suffering of the population.

It is evident, then, that the road to peace in the Middle East is indeed still long, but there are grounds for hope given such positive signs as the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria. This good example indicates that, with further efforts, we can ultimately succeed in defining the conditions for peaceful coexistence between Israel and its Arab neighbours in the light of the aspirations for peace and security on all sides.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on which the stability of the entire region seems to depend, requires ongoing attention and unflagging support from the Security Council so as to ensure compliance with all related resolutions it has adopted.

In conclusion, we would like once again to reaffirm that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be contemplated without the commitment and determination of all actors in the conflict. They should shoulder their responsibilities, reaffirm their commitment, show their firm determination and take ownership of the processes leading to peace.

**Mr. Urbina** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and your delegation for convening this debate. We would also like to welcome Mr. Fernandez-Taranco and thank him for the report he has given us. We welcome the presence here today of the distinguished representatives of Israel and Palestine.

This debate is a timely and necessary one. The quantity and quality of efforts today seem to show the conviction of the international community that the time has come for the conflict in the Middle East, a source of instability and violence, to be put to rest once and for all.

Despite the temporary suspension of negotiations, perhaps never before have there been so many initiatives, never before have we been so close to making reality the aspirations of two communities in neighbouring countries to live as two States, side by side, in peace and security.

However, the remaining tasks are not easy ones. There are a number of situations which will require renewed determination by all parties in the region and by those who have interest or influence in that region. In this context, we agree on the need to conclude prompt peace agreements between Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Syria. The Arab Peace Initiative is a key platform for the normalization of relations among all States in the region. We hope that in the future it will be possible to extend respect and coexistence beyond this very reduced environment in which we must work today.

Costa Rica also knows that the unity of the Palestinian people is an absolutely essential ingredient for the progress of any peace initiative between Israelis and Palestinians. We recognize the valuable mediation efforts of Egypt and the Arab League, and we call upon the Palestinian people to place their trust in peaceful means, to recognize the State of Israel and to comply with earlier agreements and commitments.

We also hope that once the natural shocks which a change of regime produces have been overcome the authorities of Israel and Palestine will return to negotiate on key remaining issues in the conflict, without preconditions and with the understanding that these negotiations will be carried out on the basis of obligations already undertaken and agreements previously reached between the parties which are underpinned by international law and the decisions of this Council.

In this context, Costa Rica supports the appeal of the Quartet to the parties to comply with their obligations in accordance with the Road Map, and we share their belief that unilateral action will not prejudge the result of the negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community. We believe, therefore, that it is absolutely essential for Israel to halt its policies of settlements and their expansion, regardless of what it chooses to call it. Every new wall built is a new obstacle to peace.

Particularly in this area, Israel must not ignore international law or the consensus which exists on this issue in the international community. This persistent illegal behaviour on Israel's part is one of the reasons — although not the only one — why its other concerns are not being considered with the calm necessary for their resolution. Likewise, we urge the Government of Israel to contain the violence of some of its settlers against Palestinians.

Costa Rica has always understood the legitimate security concerns of Israel. However, we believe that they do not justify the disproportionate restrictions it imposes on the Palestinian people, affecting their human rights and creating an unparalleled humanitarian situation. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dramatic and unsustainable as a result of the restriction of flows of humanitarian and commercial goods on which some 1.5 million people depend. It must change. Access must be allowed for materials to rebuild the homes, hospitals, schools and medical infrastructure destroyed at the beginning of this year. We reiterate our call for international law, in particular international humanitarian law, to be respected and for border crossing activity to be normalized.

Costa Rica welcomes the measures that the Israeli Government has taken to ease restrictions on movement in the West Bank and hopes for new conciliatory gestures on its part. Similarly, we acknowledge the reforms adopted by the Palestinian Authority to improve its security sector, and we see Israeli cooperation as a step in the right direction towards the establishment of robust Palestinian institutions that one day will be part of its State apparatus.

I conclude by acknowledging the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the courage with which it continues to provide assistance to those affected by the conflict, despite the difficult conditions in which it works.

**Mr. Quarrey** (United Kingdom): Like others, we are grateful to Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing to the Security Council this morning. Indeed, we welcome him to the Council for the first time.

In the Council's regular meetings on this issue in recent months, there has been broad agreement on what needs to be done to achieve the ultimate goal of a two-State solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, based on 1967 borders, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. However, the peace negotiations essential to achieving that aim still elude us. The parties must take bold action to create an atmosphere conducive to peace.

We fully support last week's statement by the Secretary-General calling for a freeze on Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories. Such settlements are illegal under international law. Their continued expansion, including so-called natural growth, goes against the overwhelming international consensus and, indeed, the decisions of the Security Council. It creates a further obstacle to the two-State solution, which is the only sustainable response to the national aspirations of both parties.

We are especially concerned by Prime Minister Netanyahu's recent comments, rejecting calls to halt work on the Shepherd's Hotel settlement project in East Jerusalem. Developments such as that, in what is by any measure an Arab neighbourhood, would seriously undermine the prospects for a successful two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine. We urge the Israeli Government to bring an immediate halt to that construction and to cease activities such as the house demolitions and evictions that continue to cause such deep resentment.

We also encourage Arab partners to demonstrate their readiness to move towards a normalization of relations with Israel, as envisaged in the Arab Peace Initiative. Prime Minister Netanyahu's remarks on 23 July indicated Israeli's interest in expanding peace with the Palestinians into a broader regional peace. We welcome the views expressed recently by His Highness the Crown Prince of Bahrain on taking forward the Arab Peace Initiative. It is vital that all Arab States demonstrate both their commitment to dialogue and peaceful relations and their willingness to respond positively to any significant Israeli action to freeze settlement activity.

Firm commitments are also needed from the Palestinians. Rocket and mortar attacks by Palestinian militants continue. The people of southern Israel have the right to live free from terror. We call for those attacks to stop, for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit, for access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to Corporal Shalit and for an end to all acts of violence. Palestinian factions should unite behind President Abbas, and we support the efforts of Egypt in that regard. Palestinian reconciliation is essential to prevent further political separation of the West Bank and Gaza.

We are encouraged by the recent increase in economic activity in the West Bank. We support the work of Quartet Representative Tony Blair and his team in helping to create the conditions for such activity. In particular, there have been positive developments in the city of Nablus, where the removal of just six Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints has led to a marked improvement to local economic activity. We welcome recent Israeli action to reduce movement and access restrictions and encourage further such steps. The benefits are plain to see.

That is all in sharp contrast to the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are still a long way from the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). Continued Israeli restrictions imposed on the Gaza crossings have allowed for little improvement in the plight of ordinary Gazans. Restrictions on certain foodstuffs and reconstruction materials have a serious and detrimental impact, forcing goods to be smuggled in through tunnels. As those tunnels are under Hamas control, the restrictions serve only to strengthen their position. It is in the interest of all that those restrictions be eased, particularly as winter approaches.

We remain deeply concerned by allegations that breaches of international humanitarian law were committed by both sides during the Gaza conflict earlier this year. We encourage all parties involved to cooperate fully with the Human Rights Council fact-finding mission, headed by Justice Goldstone.

As I said at the start, much-needed peace talks still elude us. With regard to Syria, Lebanon and Israel, negotiations are the only way to resolve the issues that divide them. Now is the time to take that forward. We urge Syria and Israel to restart indirect peace talks and to consider moving to direct talks.

The positive manner in which the Lebanese elections took place provides a good basis on which to make real progress towards creating a durable peace. Recent events in south Lebanon, particularly the explosion of an arms cache on 14 July, underline, however, the urgency of moving towards a comprehensive agreement. We are deeply concerned that Hizbullah continues to maintain a substantial military capacity, which is a destabilizing factor for the whole region. We condemn the recent attacks on peacekeepers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in the strongest possible terms. We urge all parties to step up their commitment to full and unconditional implementation of resolution 1701

(2006). Movement on Ghajar would be an important confidence-building measure.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East and to welcome him to the Security Council.

Since the Security Council's previous discussions on the Middle East, the situation in the region has remained at the centre of the international community's attention. With the 11 May ministerial-level meeting of the Council (see S/PV.6123), the Trieste meeting of the Quartet of Middle East mediators and the Group of Eight (G-8) summit in L'Aquila, the international legal basis for the peace process has been reaffirmed, primarily the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Road Map. The significance of the Arab Peace Initiative has been noted. The importance of the two-State principle has been voiced.

All those key provisions were also reflected in a statement made by the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, at the headquarters of the League of Arab States. A positive development that should be noted is the readiness expressed by the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, for an immediate resumption of negotiations with the Palestinian side and his de facto recognition of the two-State concept.

I emphasize that the main objective now is to create conditions for an immediate resumption of negotiations and strict compliance by the parties with their obligations under the Road Map, including to combat terrorist activity and to ensure freedom of movement for the population in the West Bank.

One of the main factors hampering the resumption of dialogue is settlement activity, including natural growth. We consider unacceptable actions that bring about new realities on the ground and could prejudge the outcome of final-status negotiations. The ongoing blockade of Gaza, which is causing the suffering of civilians in the Gaza Strip, is also unacceptable. Moving the peace process forward requires restoring unity in the Palestinian ranks, based on well-known principles.

Once again, we would like to commend most highly the mediation efforts of Egypt. We look forward to results in moving intra-Palestinian consultations forward. Unfortunately, the most recent round has once again been postponed — this time to 25 August.

With regard to achieving a comprehensive settlement in the region, another relevant factor is the return to active diplomacy on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the peace process. It is now important, through collective efforts, actively to help eliminate obstacles to restoring a full-fledged regional peace process. Russia's initiative to hold an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow this year, which has wide support, aims to promote that goal. We continue to prepare for the forum, which is enshrined in the Security Council resolutions, the decisions of the Middle East Quartet and the recent G-8 summit.

That topic was discussed during the latest trip to the region by the Special Representative to the Middle East of the President of Russia, Alexander Saltanov, who held extensive talks in the region. We firmly intend to continue our work at various levels with all interested parties and partners. The Moscow meeting should be effective and productive.

I would now like to say a few words on Lebanon. Russia continues to hold the position of unwavering support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Lebanese State. We welcome the successful holding of parliamentary elections. We are closely following talks under way in Beirut among the leading political parties of the country, and hope they will soon conclude and that an effective Government will be formed to represent the interests of all communities living in Lebanon.

We are concerned by outbreaks of tension in southern Lebanon and welcome efforts now being made by Lebanese authorities in cooperation with the United Nations, to defuse the tension. We reaffirm the need for strict compliance with the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) by all sides without exception. That is the only way to guarantee the maintenance of stability in southern Lebanon.

**Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this open meeting and Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East.

Over the past six months, the Middle East peace process has had its ups and downs. Early in the year, the conflict in Gaza claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians and caused serious loss of property, making the original situation more tense and fragile. The Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009) which led to an end to hostilities between Israel and Palestine and created conditions for relaunching the peace process. However, it is disturbing that the resolution has not been fully and effectively implemented. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains serious and reconstruction has been slow.

China calls upon all parties concerned to fully and conscientiously implement resolution 1860 (2009) and to avoid taking any action that could reignite tension. China calls on Israel to open all the crossing points into Gaza and to ensure that reconstruction can proceed smoothly. The international community should honour its pledges as soon as possible in order to help the people of Gaza normalize their lives.

The situation in the other occupied Palestinian territories is also a source of concern. The situation of the Palestinian people in the West Bank remains tense and they cannot enjoy a life of dignity. China expresses its deep concern and urges Israel to respond conscientiously to the appeal of the international community to halt construction of the separation wall and the settlements.

In the current situation, political negotiation remains the only viable path towards the achievement of lasting peace in the Middle East. China believes that irreversible peace can be achieved only through a negotiated agreement by all parties. We hope that all parties will commit themselves to dialogue with the goal of achieving the comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East that it is in their own interest and in the interest of regional peace and stability in the Middle East. We call on all parties to avoid any action that could exacerbate tensions in the Middle East.

Reconciliation between Palestinians is essential to safeguarding the interests of the Palestinian people and to ensuring the resumption of the Middle East peace process. China appreciates Egypt's efforts to that end and hopes that the Palestinian parties will set store by their long-term national interests, resolve their differences through dialogue, achieve reconciliation and establish a Government of national unity.

Resolving the issue of Israel and Palestine is the only way to achieve the peaceful coexistence of the two States of Palestine and Israel. China supports the implementation of the two-State solution based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace. That will require not only the efforts of the parties concerned, but also the help and support of the international community. All parties must try their best to encourage Palestine and Israel to address their challenges positively and to persevere in their efforts to achieve the objective of the two States of Palestine and Israel with the Arab people and Jewish people living in peace.

Other issues in the Middle East are also important components of the Middle East peace process. China is pleased to see that the political and security situation in Lebanon has improved somewhat and that legislative elections have been carried out. China hopes that Lebanon can form a new Government as soon as possible. We respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and express our concern about the multiple security incidents that have taken place recently in southern Lebanon. We call on all parties concerned to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and encourage them to create conditions for the resumption of negotiations between Syria and Israel.

China has always been committed to the promotion of the Middle East peace process and welcomes all initiatives conducive to that end. We support Russia's initiatives to convene an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow within the year. China encourages the Quartet and the Arab countries to play an important role in persuading the parties concerned to resume serious and direct negotiations as soon as possible.

It is China's hope that the Security Council will address the question of the Middle East more actively. We are ready to join with the wider international community in pursuing the unremitting efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

**Mr. Çorman** (Turkey): As Turkey aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, I will keep my remarks brief.

First, I wish to thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing.

As international efforts to reinvigorate the search for peace in the Middle East are under way, the expectation is building within the international community for a prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations to resolve all permanent status issues, as stated in the recent Quartet declaration.

Given the fact that there has been no functional process in the region for a while, the resumption of the peace process on all its tracks has become a matter of urgency. At this stage, strong affirmation is needed for the framework of peace as embodied in the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map obligations. It is crucial that we keep dialogue channels open with all parties and remain committed to the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. That vision holds the key to a permanent peace in the Middle East and has no alternative.

In this respect, we also wish to note the particular importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, which Turkey firmly supports. As we hope to enter a new and intensive period, it is incumbent upon the parties to adopt a constructive and positive approach. In this vein, they should first fulfil their obligations emanating from the Road Map and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, the parties must avoid taking steps and declaring preconditions that might empty the peace process of its content. The core issues are subject to final status negotiations and should not be undermined by unilateral acts. Any action that prejudges the final outcome of the negotiations would only lead to a further crisis of confidence among the parties.

Here, we wish to underline our concern, once again, about the settlement activities of Israel in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as measures taken by Israel that could alter the character and status of Jerusalem and further isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian territory. Turkey has repeatedly made it clear that such policies are not compatible with peace efforts and hamper the peace process. They are illegal and should stop.

There is a persistent need for international efforts in the peace process to be accompanied by decisive actions on the ground in order to offer a real change for the Palestinians and give them the chance to lead a better life. At this point, we sadly note that there has been almost no progress in recent months on implementing resolution 1860 (2009). We re-emphasize the fact that the full opening of the crossings into Gaza is a must for the humanitarian response, socio-economic recovery and reconstruction. The suffocation of Gaza has led to immense suffering, unprecedented unemployment and poverty rates, and almost total aid dependency. This situation must be reversed.

I would also emphasize the fact that reconciliation among Palestinian groups is also a must. We hope that talks to this end will succeed and that the presidential and legislative elections will be held at the appropriate times.

As for Lebanon, we reaffirm our strong support for resolution 1701 (2006) and its full implementation by all parties. We hope that, following the elections in Lebanon, a Government that embraces all segments of the Lebanese people is established as soon as possible. At the current stage, it is essential that all parties in Lebanon act in conformity with the national dialogue process initiated by President Michel Sleiman. We believe that lasting stability in Lebanon is important not only to Lebanon itself, but also to the peace and security of the entire region.

In the Middle East, we need to maintain optimism in the face of the challenges persisting in the region. Currently, there have been some developments that do give us some hope. Let us keep in mind that opportunities rarely last forever and that now is the right time to seize them. For our part, we continue to work on all tracks of the Middle East peace process to achieve a viable and comprehensive peace.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uganda.

We thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We also welcome the representatives of Israel and Palestine to this debate.

We welcome the relative calm during the period under review, despite a few incidents. It is clear from the briefing that not much progress has been achieved on the implementation of key elements of resolution 1860 (2009). We welcome the efforts undertaken by different parties within and outside the region towards the reinvigoration of the peace process. We are encouraged by the affirmation by the Quartet, following its recent meeting held in Trieste on 26 June, in which its members reiterated their determination to actively seek a comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict. We welcome and support the convening of the international conference on the Middle East in Moscow later this year.

Uganda calls for an early resumption and conclusion of negotiations between the parties towards a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region premised on a two-State solution and independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

We welcome the recent removal of checkpoints and roadblocks in the West Bank by Israel. We also commend the recent steps taken to boost the Palestinian economy in the West Bank. We nevertheless reiterate our concern over the continued blockade of Gaza. It is clear that this blockade continues to have a negative impact on the fabric of civilian life, and we call for its immediate end. We also call for an end to arms smuggling into Gaza.

My delegation also reiterates its concern over the significant rise in settler activities in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which have continued to take their toll on the population. We call for a freeze on all settlement activity, including natural growth.

Uganda appreciates the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to implement its obligations under the sector reforms of the Road Map. We note the budgetary constraints it is facing. We call on development partners to fulfil their pledges in order to enable the Palestinian Authority to meet its obligations, including the payment of salaries to civil servants.

We are also concerned that divisions among Palestinian groups persist, with a detrimental effect on the overall negotiations related to the Middle East question. The divisions have adversely affected the reconstruction and development of Gaza. We reiterate our call on the Palestinians to peacefully resolve their differences. In this regard, we commend Egypt for its role in promoting Palestinian unity and Palestinian reconciliation. My delegation urges all parties to fully comply with all Council resolutions.

With regard to Lebanon, we are deeply concerned about the explosions that occurred on 14 July in the area of Khirbat Salim and the subsequent injuries to a number of troops serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. We call on all parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and to avoid engaging in any acts that may aggravate the situation in Lebanon.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): Mr. President, on behalf of Palestine, I warmly congratulate you and your friendly country, Uganda, on your presidency of the Security Council and express our confidence that you will ably guide the Council as it works on this month's agenda. We also express our appreciation to Turkey for its wise stewardship of the Council in June.

I also wish to express our appreciation for today's monthly briefing to the Council delivered by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Fernandez-Taranco. It remains an important barometer of the situation on the ground and of the many challenges that we continue to confront in our search for peace and security in the region.

In the few months since the Security Council's most recent open debate on the situation (see S/PV.6123), there have been some encouraging developments. In late March, the twenty-first summit of the League of Arab States, held in Doha, Qatar, reaffirmed the Arab Peace Initiative, which has emerged as a key component of the regional and international efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. Significantly, in a testament to the genuine Arab commitment to and readiness for peace and coexistence, the Initiative was renewed in spite of the deep anger, mistrust and tensions permeating the region following the criminal Israeli military onslaught against the Gaza Strip earlier in the year. The opportunity provided by the Arab Peace Initiative for the advancement of peace must be urgently seized.

Other encouraging developments have been the reaffirmation of the international consensus on the necessity and parameters of a peace settlement and the reassertion of the Security Council's central role vis-à-vis the achievement of such a settlement. These were reflected in the Council's adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2009/14) on 11 May 2009 at a ministerial meeting held under its Russian Federation presidency (see S/PV.6123). In following up to resolution 1850 (2008), the Council, inter alia, reaffirmed the two-State solution, the irreversibility of the peace process and support for an international conference in Moscow this year on the Middle East peace process, which, under the appropriate circumstances, could constitute an important forum for the resumption of peace negotiations that we all seek.

As evidenced in that debate and in other recent deliberations on this matter, the achievement of a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine is a political, security, legal, human rights, humanitarian and moral responsibility and an imperative for the international community that can no longer be delayed. That, too, was the clear message conveyed in the Quartet statement issued on 26 June 2009 in Trieste, as well as in recent statements by the European Union, which, inter alia, reaffirmed the Union's commitment to the principles and the basis of the peace process and which also bolster the overwhelming international consensus that has existed for so long regarding a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

Over the past few months, we have also been encouraged by the more active, balanced approach being taken by the new United States Administration of President Barack Obama towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, based on a clear commitment to the two-State solution for peace and justice. President Obama's speech in Cairo last month, as well as the diplomatic efforts of his Special Envoy George Mitchell, have renewed hopes in the vast potential of responsible, fair United States leadership to contribute positively to the achievement of a solution that will make peace and security a reality for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, as well as for the Middle East region as a whole.

Despite those developments, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, remains grave and the peace process remains frozen. That is because of Israel's continued violation of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and its rejection of the appeals to cease its violations and instead truly pursue peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008) and the principle of land for peace, underpinning all tracks of the peace process.

In contrast, the Palestinian leadership has consistently endeavoured to uphold its obligations under international law, agreements reached and the Road Map. It has made historic concessions and repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the two-State solution for peace; has made well-documented progress in the fulfilment of its obligation to promote security and the rule of law in the areas under the Palestinian Authority; has strived, with the support of the international donor community, to build the institutions of the future Palestinian State; and has also continued to pursue much-desired national reconciliation and unity. All of that has been undertaken despite the unending cycle of Israel's violations, including of its obligations as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention, of previous agreements and of its obligations under the Road Map.

Indeed, Israel has repeatedly undermined confidence and progress by refusing to refrain from illegal, destructive and unilateral measures prejudicing the outcome of negotiations on the core final status issues — Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, borders, security and water. It has continued to establish facts on the ground, creating even more obstacles with which to contend, in addition to its relentless oppression and humiliation of the Palestinian people, including the perpetration of gross human rights violations and war crimes.

Israel's credibility as a peace partner has thus remained in serious question. That was the case with the previous Government, which launched the Israeli military aggression against Gaza and accelerated settlement activities, and it is the case with the current Government, which continues to flout the law, further inflaming tensions and obstructing the resumption of negotiations.

In the Gaza Strip, Israel continues to inflict vast deprivations on the Palestinian civilian population which it has so gravely traumatized and terrorized. The disastrous impact of the Israeli military aggression on Gaza's socio-economic, humanitarian and security situation is far from being ameliorated, as Israel continues to blockade Gaza and prevent its reconstruction, in grave violation of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1860 (2009), and with total disrespect for the repeated calls to lift its inhumane siege and to cease forthwith its imprisonment and collective punishment of the entire Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

In that regard, we must also recall that more than 11,000 Palestinians remain captive and suffering in Israeli jails and detention centres. Among the unlawfully imprisoned and arbitrarily detained are hundreds of children and women, as well as democratically elected officials, and their numbers continue to grow with Israel's daily arrests.

At the same time, in flagrant defiance of international law and the international community's demands for the cessation of all settlement activities, Israel continues its construction of settlements and the wall, its transfer of Israeli settlers, its land confiscations, its home demolitions, its excavations and its imposition of hundreds of checkpoints in the West Bank. The current Government's zealous support for the illegal settlement enterprise has also further emboldened settlers, whose acts of violence and depravity against Palestinian civilians and property have sharply escalated.

That these illegal, provocative colonization measures are directly aimed at creating and entrenching massive facts on the ground in order to alter the demography and character of the territory and to prejudge the negotiations can no longer be denied. Moreover, this colonization drive has been most intense in and around East Jerusalem, the heart of the Palestinian territory, where the lives, communities and growth of the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants of the city are being deliberately stunted and suffocated by the occupying Power's aggressive pursuit of de facto annexation.

It is widely recognized that the current situation is abnormal, unjust and untenable. Yet, regrettably, no real collective action has been taken in response. The obvious question then is, what can and must be done by us — all of us — to redress this situation?

A settlement freeze and the dismantlement of all outposts is a priority. In the debate today, all Member States who spoke unanimously concurred with this request: an immediate and total settlement freeze. Israeli colonization is destroying the contiguity, integrity and unity of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, thus destroying the viability of the future Palestinian State and the prospects for realizing the two-State solution. Attempts to minimize, belittle or distract from the settlements issue must be rejected. All settlement activities, including so-called natural growth, are unlawful, unnatural and contradictory to the principle of land for peace and the main objective of the peace process, which is the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the 1967 borders.

In this connection, attempts to characterize Israeli acceptance of the two-State solution as a concession must also be rejected. The two-State solution not only finds its basis in Security Council resolutions, but also dates back to General Assembly partition resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, to which Israel owes its very existence.

At the same time, another priority is the lifting of the Israelis' blockade of Gaza and the sustained opening of all border crossings, in accordance with international humanitarian law, United Nations resolutions and the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. The free movement of persons and goods, including unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance, the commercial flows necessary for the revival of the collapsed economy and the entry of construction materials and adequate fuel supplies, are a matter of urgency.

In this regard, we support the Secretary-General's proposal for the immediate launch of long-overdue United Nations projects in Gaza as a start for reconstruction. The proposal of starting with $93 million, made by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations Development Programme, which was agreed upon two years ago — and the funding is there — is the first step that should be undertaken. The only party that does not agree with this proposal — all of us agree, including all Council members — is the Government of Israel. The Secretary-General is awaiting a positive answer from the Government of Israel in this connection.

Moreover, we reaffirm the need to pursue accountability for Israeli war crimes against the Palestinian people. No Member State should be permitted to breach the law so shamefully, systematically and unapologetically without consequences. We thus await the report of the Human Rights Council fact-finding mission and call for follow-up of its findings and recommendations as well as those of the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry. This is crucial for ending impunity, redressing the searing sense of injustice among the thousands of victims and allowing genuine healing to occur. It is unquestionable that this is also essential for the long-term prospects for peace, reconciliation and coexistence.

The international community must remain active and consistent in the efforts to advance the international consensus vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The recent encouraging developments must be seized upon.

If faced with continued Israeli defiance, the international community must use the political and diplomatic tools at its disposal — foremost via the Security Council — to collectively take the measures necessary to bring Israel into compliance with the Charter, international law and United Nations resolutions, including with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Only this will create a different environment, in which the talk of and the efforts for peace will actually have a chance to succeed, bringing an end to the entire 1967 Israeli occupation of Arab lands and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, which is the key to the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in our region.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Ms. Shalev** (Israel): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership of the Council for the month of July. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his informative briefing.

I shall begin my statement by citing from a letter sent by courageous residents of Khirbat Salim to the President of Lebanon in the aftermath of the explosion in their village earlier this month. The letter appeared in the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Mustaqbal* on 16 July.

> "The explosion of the arms depot in our town Khirbat Salim is a most dangerous and worrisome matter, which brings into the open what everyone is trying to black out, to obfuscate and to conceal, namely illegal arms and their storage in our civilian areas and in basements near our children by an organization that has begun to pose a threat to our interests and to our tranquil lives.
>
> "The policy that we are adopting thus far, of concealing what is happening in reality, due to various security pretexts, in effect allow the armed elements to fulfil their interests at the expense of ... the welfare and the prosperity of people of the Lebanese nation."

The letter continues:

> "To the leaders of Hizbullah we say: we are not so naive. We distinguish very well between the sounds of regular fire and the sounds of an explosion of cluster bombs and other explosive materials. We have had enough of the pain and the disasters of the so-called victory of July 2006. If you, as you claim, tie your activity to religion and Allah, then you must empty the residential areas of weaponry and ammunition and of all else that threatens our lives."

This explosion, which occurred 13 days ago, exposed the world to a dangerous phenomenon that Israel has been warning about for years. It demonstrated that the Hizbullah terrorist organization, together with its two sponsors — Member States of this Organization — continue to operate actively south of the Litani river in overt violation of resolution 1701 (2006), as this Council was informed last week by Under-Secretary-General Le Roy. This severe incident — the most grave in a series of violations by Hizbullah over the last three years — demonstrates to the world the volatile reality on the ground.

It further shows the challenges to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), namely, an unenforced arms embargo along the Lebanese-Syrian border and the presence of Hizbullah on the ground. This terrorist group threatens Israel, Lebanon and the region, as it continues to build its military infrastructure, both north and south of the Litani River.

Above all, the Khirbat Salim explosion demonstrated that the work of the Security Council in Lebanon is necessary and urgent. In that regard, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on convening the consultations and briefing by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations held on 23 July. However, there is more to be done.

The repeated breaches by Hizbullah of the Council's demands are indicative of the danger posed to our region by Iran. From southern Lebanon to Gaza, the arming, training and financing of terrorism bear the same certificate of origin: Tehran. The Iranian Government remains the world's greatest sponsor of terrorism. It sabotages the peace process. It threatens the stability of countries in the region.

Moreover, Iran continues to pursue the development of nuclear weapons, together with long-range missiles. That is a clear threat to peace and to security. Such grave realities reflect an unsustainable future. The Security Council has already addressed that dangerous phenomenon, but there is more to be done on this issue, too. We call upon the Council to act urgently and effectively to put an end to the Iranian nuclear threat and to stem Iranian terrorist interference. The Council must consider more effective ways to impose its arms embargo along the Lebanese-Syrian border. It should strengthen the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese armed forces and establish clear benchmarks to disarm and dismantle Hizbullah.

Turning to Gaza, the Council cannot ignore the second terrorist front that Israel confronts — the Hamas rulers of Gaza. We cannot ignore the smuggling of deadly weapons and arms into Gaza, which, sadly, hasten a future military conflict. As acknowledged in a recent report by Mr. Robert Serry, Israel advised that it had detected the smuggling into Gaza of no less than 330 mortars, 37 rockets, roughly 40 anti-tank weapons, 46 anti-aircraft missiles and 17 tons of explosives.

Those numbers reflect only part of Hamas's military build-up and demonstrate its desire to provoke another conflict. The Hamas terrorist organization continues to reject the terms established by the international community, namely, recognition of the State of Israel, an end to violence and acceptance of previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel desires peace. Our desire for peace is rooted in our yearning for a future in which Israelis and Palestinians will have put an end to the suffering and bereavement that have afflicted our region for too long. We seek a brighter future, a future in which Israel and all of its Arab neighbours can better fulfil their aspirations and pursue their dream of leading normal, peaceful and creative lives.

Peace is built solely through direct negotiations between the parties themselves. Our partners in the peace process must recognize that Israel has always been and will continue to be the eternal homeland of the Jewish people. As Israel's Prime Minister recently stated, if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the Jewish State, we are ready to agree to a real peace agreement — a demilitarized Palestinian State side by side with the Jewish State.

This year, Israel took a number of successful security coordination steps that extend Palestinian movement, strengthen Palestinian security forces and improve the Palestinian economy. Thus, 152 roadblocks have been dismantled or have extended their hours of passage. Such measures offer improvements to the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and serve as important confidence-building measures. A special ministerial committee headed by the Prime Minister was established to facilitate economic projects and integration between Israel and the West Bank. Such efforts, including an industrial zone in Jenin, an agricultural export venture in Jericho and the creation of tourist infrastructure along the Jordan River, are only the beginning. Yet they offer concrete ways to build a foundation of coexistence in our region.

Earlier this month, the Quartet's Middle East Envoy, Mr. Tony Blair, publicly applauded Israel's concrete efforts to promote peace. He noted that such steps had not been appropriately commended, or even acknowledged, by members of the international community.

Israel continues to call for the immediate resumption of a political dialogue with the Palestinian Authority. Israel will continue to build a foundation of peace that promotes progress on economic, political and security-related matters. We call upon all our neighbours to translate into action the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative. Admittedly, dangers and risks still remain. In the West Bank, Israeli and Palestinian security forces have successfully curbed terrorist activities. However, such success has not yet significantly diminished the threat at hand.

We now stand at a critical juncture. One path is the way of terrorism and hatred. It is the way of Hamas, the way of Hizbullah and the way of terror. It is the way of Iran. It offers violence, not vision; confrontation, not coexistence. A second way lies ahead of us, as well. It is the way of peace, prosperity and mutual respect. It is a way that represents a better future for all in our beleaguered region. It offers hope to our peoples. Israel, for its part, has made a clear choice — to pursue the way of peace.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

**Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. My delegation is confident that your wisdom, knowledge and diplomatic skills will enable this body to fulfil its duties. Allow me also to express our deep appreciation to your predecessor, Permanent Representative of Turkey Ambassador Baki İlkin, for his able leadership. With his team, he managed several crises and challenges successfully. I also wish to thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his exhaustive and comprehensive briefing.

Once again, we are meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East; and once again, peace, as well as the region, are facing critical challenges and threats. What was supposed to be the year of peace and a window of opportunity started with a systematic Israeli war on Gaza. Indeed, for each call for peace, Israel is building a settlement. For each step that the international community takes towards establishing a Palestinian State, Israel introduces its own definition of that State and imposes its own conditions: no control over the airspace, the sea or crossing points; no army; no contiguous territory; no sovereignty; no Jerusalem; and no return of refugees. There is only one yes, namely, the responsibility of that so-called State to ensure the security of Israel. In that context, one might ask: Who will defend Palestine and the Palestinian people? Who will defend the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland? Who will defend Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem? Who will defend the peace process?

In the midst of this precarious situation, and again from Lebanon, where the Arab Peace Initiative was adopted in 2002, the President of Lebanon, General Sleiman, reiterated the importance of this initiative when he stated that "the Arab peace initiative is an opportunity to achieve a just and comprehensive peace". He urged the United States and Europe "to exert more pressure on Israel to accept a fair peace initiative".

How hopeful we were when we heard statements from various leaders from all over the world highlighting the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, the need to put an end to settlements and the need to address the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Today, more than ever before, the will for peace should prevail. Peace is not merely a choice. It was, is and continues to be a necessity, and it should be translated into a reality. We consider that the upcoming Moscow conference should build on well-established terms of reference for the peace process, such as the principles of the Madrid Peace Conference, the Arab Peace Initiative in its entirety and relevant Security Council resolutions. As for the Moscow conference, an honest commitment should be invested in it in order to achieve a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We owe that to future generations in the region and throughout the world.

I turn now to issues related to Lebanon. Almost three years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which ended Israel's aggression against my country, the message from the President of Lebanon is clear: Lebanon remains committed to the full implementation of that resolution. Lebanon reiterates its call upon the international community to exert pressure on Israel to abide by its obligations under that resolution and to put an end to its violations.

Almost three years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), we in Lebanon are still suffering from Israeli violations on a daily basis. Israel continues to violate Lebanon's land, sea and airspace. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 63 of his tenth report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2009/330), clearly called upon Israel to cease immediately all overflights of Lebanese territory, which are in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006).

Israel continues its occupation of the northern part of Ghajar, in violation of Lebanon sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006). In paragraph 64 of the same report, the Secretary-General noted with concern, that the Israeli Forces continued their occupation of part of the village of Ghajar, and in accordance with its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006), Israel must complete its withdrawal from this area. Israel continues to occupy the Sheba'a farmlands and Kfar Shouba hills, in violation of our sovereignty over our land.

As if all those violations were not enough, the Lebanese authorities have also dismantled Israeli spy networks, which are in blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and relevant Security Council resolutions.

In addition to the delay in providing complete information on the strike data regarding the locations of the millions of cluster munitions with which Israel pounded Lebanon during the July 2006 war, killing or maiming hundreds of Lebanese civilians, Israeli officials are bombarding Lebanon with public threats. These are hostile statements on launching a massive and destructive war.

All of these violations are aimed at destabilizing Lebanon and threatening its security. They threaten peace and stability throughout the region and add to existing tensions when serious efforts are being exerted to achieve a comprehensive, just and durable peace.

As for the incidents which occurred two weeks ago in the south of Lebanon, my delegation has already shared its views on this matter in its letter of 22 July 2009. A joint investigation commission between the Lebanese army and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has been established. The investigation is still under way, and preliminary information of the investigation showed that the arms and ammunitions found were remnants of the July 2006 war. While we are still waiting for the conclusion of this investigation, we refuse to anticipate the outcome, and we reject any accusations launched by Israel of arms smuggling into UNIFIL's area of operation.

Whenever southern Lebanon is mentioned, the image of UNIFIL appears. UNIFIL, which has been present there since 1978, the year of the first Israeli invasion, has become part of the social scenery. The Force, like Lebanese civilians, has suffered losses during successive Israeli acts of presumed "self-defence". The events known as Qana 1 and Qana 2 are there to remind us of that. An understanding of the culture and the social traditions of the population and close consultation and cooperation with the Lebanese army have ensured UNIFIL's success and will reinforce its important role and established image in the south.

The international community and, in particular, the Security Council need to be fully aware of Israel's intention to change the status quo, through attempts to create new facts along the Blue Line and through provocation, by establishing new realities on the ground. Hence, our repeated calls to achieve real and sustainable progress and to move from this precarious cessation of hostilities to a permanent ceasefire.

In the framework of resolution 1701 (2006), UNIFIL has the mandate to defend civilians and prevent another Israeli aggression against Lebanon. In that context, on 4 July, my Government addressed a letter to the United Nations which requested the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate for one additional year and without any amendments. While looking forward to the upcoming renewal without any changes — either in the mandate or in any of the relevant rules and concepts of operation — my delegation would like to express Lebanon's appreciation to all troop-contributing countries and to all peacekeepers for their courage and relentless efforts to maintain security and stability in the region.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Falouh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin, Mr. President, by thanking you for convening this meeting. My thanks go also to the former Permanent Representative of friendly Turkey and his delegation for the excellent and wise manner in which they guided the work of the Security Council last month. I thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing.

The experience of the past — remote or recent — shows that those who take the path of war or the use of force to achieve political goals face only destruction. That is the case with Israel today. Israel continues to insist on using force to impose occupation, illegality, oppression and injustice upon peoples. When we say "today", we refer not only to six decades of occupation, but also to the 17 years that have elapsed since peace negotiations began in Madrid. Those negotiations have only damaged and dimmed the prospects for peace. The only positive contribution of the peace process is that it has revealed the obvious truth that Israel is the principal obstacle to achieving the long-awaited peace.

Syria, as an Arab State, believes that peace is a strategic objective encompassing the restoration of all rights and the return of all occupied territories. While the Arab States sought to achieve peace by adopting their Arab Peace Initiative seven years ago at the 2002 Beirut summit, Israel, rather than .responding positively, went on to commit further crimes, expanding its construction of settlements and its aggression against Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians; undertaking extensive, repeated and provocative military manoeuvres on its borders; creating espionage networks in Lebanon and repeatedly threatening war there. In his most recent speech, Prime Minister Netanyahu clearly rejected the objective requisites of achieving peace in the Middle East and all the bases of the peace process identified by the international community over the 20 years since that process was begun. His repudiation of the need for peace on all tracks reaffirms Israel's lack of genuine will to establish peace in the region and the absence of an Israeli partner in the peace process.

The Palestinians have lived under the yoke of occupation for more than six decades, during which they have endured the worst manifestations of injustice and subjugation and Israel has pursued its escalations and aggressions by confiscating land, building the racist separation wall, continuing its settlement activity, and attacking Palestinian farmers and international activists. In spite of all these illegal and immoral acts, Israel enjoys an impunity that Arab and international public opinion finds hard to understand.

Our meeting today coincides with the fifth anniversary of the adoption by the International Court of Justice of its advisory opinion enshrining the illegality of the separation wall and calling on Israel to destroy it. Israel continues to reject all international appeals to that end, and occupied Jerusalem is experiencing the most painful moment in its history as Israel's vicious aggression threatens its very existence and its Muslim and Christian identities, including excavations under the Al-Aqsa mosque and the campaign to destroy Palestinian homes. What can we say when confronted with the image of Palestinians forced to destroy their own homes and expelled in the name of Israeli control and Judaization of Jerusalem? Nearly 2 million Palestinians have been expelled in this new campaign of ethnic cleansing, which, under cover of what Israeli politicians call the "Jewishness" of the State of Israel, represents the darkest pages of human activity that we had hoped closed forever.

The Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza continue to suffer under the blockade. Following the thousands of casualties claimed by the Israeli aggression there, my delegation studied the report compiled by the independent Board of Inquiry dispatched by the Secretary-General to Gaza on Israel's crimes against United Nations property and Palestinian civilians, including women and children. The report noted Israel's use of white phosphorous and its responsibility for deaths and injuries inside United Nations buildings and for damaging those buildings, all of which constitute war crimes, including the Board's findings with respect to Israel's use of Gazan women, children and the elderly as human shields and its intentional destruction of United Nations infrastructure in Gaza.

The international community and the Security Council in particular must therefore call for the immediate lifting of Israel's unjust blockade of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the removal of all border crossings into Gaza. It should also recognize the need for international guarantees that Israel will not destroy the infrastructure facilities and buildings that have been or will be rebuilt, pursuant to the recommendations of the Board of Inquiry led by Mr. Ian Martin. The leaders of Israel must be held responsible for their repeated crimes, legally classified as war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide.

Israel continues to refuse to restore the occupied Golan Heights to its homeland, Syria, and to implement the decisions of the international community, including resolution 497 (1981). Israel's practices in the occupied Syrian Golan exceed all legal and moral bounds, including the recent forcible detention of the 2-year-old Fahd Louay Shker under the pretext that he had been born outside Israel while his parents studied in Syria. Israel is pursuing its terrorist and oppressive policies against Syrian citizens, confiscating their land, imprisoning them, expanding settlements and planting landmines. We recall that Israeli mines in the Syrian Golan have resulted in 531 casualties, of whom 202 died, many of them children, and have permanently disabled 329 for life.

Israel continues to refuse to allow Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan Heights to visit their homeland through the Quneitra crossing. This is at a time when Israel, which claims to be a democratic State and to respect human rights, has held many Syrian citizens in its prisons for more than a quarter of a century, along with 11,000 Palestinians.

Added to this are the various hostile declarations by Israeli leaders which run counter to peace. The question that arises is this: can Israel, with its past and current Governments — the latter the most extremist in Israel's history — having both openly and secretly blocked any possibility of reaching a peace agreement since the beginning of the peace process, be a partner in the peace process?

We just heard the statement by the Israeli representative with respect to the need to put an end to arms smuggling at the Syrian-Lebanese border. But then we see the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2009/330), reports of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and reports by Lebanese authorities which contradict what the Israeli representative said. All of this is something everyone knows today.

This is a desperate attempt by Israel to distract the attention of the international community from the crimes it has committed in occupied Palestine, in the Golan Heights and in Lebanon. It is also an attempt to conceal its 4,268 documented violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006) since 2006. These are not only flagrant violations of resolution 1701 (2006); they are also a threat to peace and security in the region. This is why the Security Council must hold Israel to account for these violations and must take the necessary measures to put an end to them.

Syria has opted for a just and comprehensive peace. This was a strategic choice based on well-known terms of reference established in resolutions of international legitimacy. This means the return of all occupied Arab lands, including the occupied Syrian Golan, up to the borders of 4 June 1967 and the creation of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

The continued occupation runs counter to peace and necessitates taking all possible measures to put an end to it.

**The President**: There are still a number of speakers on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

*The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.*

United Nations S/PV.6171 (Resumption 1)

# Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

*Provisional*

## 6171st meeting

Monday, 27 July 2009, 3.15 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President:* | Mr. Rugunda | (Uganda) |
| *Members:* | Austria | Mr. Lutterotti |
| | Burkina Faso | Mr. Koudougou |
| | China | Mr. Huang Hongjiang |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. Guillermet |
| | Croatia | Ms. Čačić |
| | France | Mr. Kassianides |
| | Japan | Mr. Arima |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Gebreel |
| | Mexico | Mr. Pintado |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Turkey | Mr. Dizdar |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Williams |
| | United States of America | Mr. Gordon |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Bui The Giang |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting resumed at 3.20 p.m.*

**The President**: I wish to remind all speakers, as I indicated at the morning session, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt): I have the pleasure to address the Security Council on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and to start by expressing the Movement's appreciation for the briefing presented today by Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, which remains one of the most important tools for assessing the situation on the ground and for addressing efforts aimed at advancing the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The situation in the Middle East, which has deteriorated as a result of the ongoing unlawful Israeli occupation of the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories since 1967, continues to be a matter of serious concern not only to the region, but to the entire international community.

The Non-Aligned Movement regrets the lack of progress made, despite increased efforts at the international and regional levels, in achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the two-State solution, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1373 (2001), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008). That lack of progress is due to Israel's continued violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights laws, and its rejection of all calls to cease its flagrant violations and to pursue negotiations in good faith on all tracks of the peace process.

Israel, the occupying Power, obstructs efforts to resume peace negotiations by its violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including their humiliation on a daily basis, in addition to its constant actions aimed at imposing unilateral solutions by illegally creating new facts on the ground aimed at altering the demographic composition, status and character of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Israel does not refrain from taking measures that prejudice the outcome of negotiations on final-status issues, namely Jerusalem, settlements, the refugees, borders, security and water. Such illegal measures deepen mistrust, provoke further tension, prevent real progress and raise real doubts as to Israel's credibility as a partner in the peace process.

In the West Bank, Israel continues its illegal colonization of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, intensifying its confiscation of Palestinian land, expansion of settlements and transfer of settlers, construction of the wall and other destructive measures, including the demolition of more Palestinian homes, in an attempt to, de facto, annex more Palestinian land. All of that is being done in grave breach of international law and United Nations resolutions, as well as Israel's commitments under the Road Map, which clearly calls for a freeze of all Israeli settlement activities, including natural growth, and the dismantlement of all outposts established since March 2001.

Israel has failed to commit to a freeze on all settlement activities and continues to defy the international consensus in that regard. The international community, including the Security Council, must use all practical means and tools available under the Charter and international law to take the necessary measures to compel or to bring Israel into compliance. The Non-Aligned Movement expresses deep concern regarding the extensive damage caused by the Israeli settlements, the wall and the spread of checkpoints, which are severing the Palestinian territories into separate cantons, isolating East Jerusalem, undermining the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Palestinian territory, and jeopardizing the prospects for achieving the two-State solution.

Further, the unresolved crisis in Gaza continues to have negative repercussions on all efforts to advance the peace process and wreaks unacceptable havoc on the fabric of society and civilian life in Gaza. Israel continues to impose a blockade on the Palestinian civilian population, to deprive them of their humanitarian needs and to prevent Gaza's reconstruction, in violation of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel lift immediately its illegal blockade by allowing for the immediate and sustained opening of all border crossings to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and to realize the urgent early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza. The Non-Aligned Movement also believes that there is no legal, political or moral justification for the Israeli imprisonment of the Palestinian population in Gaza and calls for the end of such unlawful collective punishment.

Turning to Lebanon, the Non-Aligned Movement remains deeply concerned by Israel's ongoing air and land violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in breach of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and calls on Israel to withdraw fully from the remaining Lebanese occupied land in the Sheba'a farms, the Kfar Shouba Hills and the northern part of al-Ghajar village.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken, or to be taken, by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as the Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation also of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

International determination to work towards achieving peace in the Middle East and ensuring that commitments made are commitments monitored and kept is stronger today than ever before. The Arab side has reiterated time after time the readiness and willingness for peace, as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative, based on the concept of full land for full peace. It is now the responsibility of Israel to seize the opportunity to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace by stopping its illegal settlement activities, bringing an end to its 42-year occupation and clearly committing to the two-State solution, to be achieved peacefully through negotiations on all core issues on the basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its firm commitment to continue to support and to contribute to all efforts aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I shall now speak in my national capacity. Egypt is participating in the efforts to relaunch the peace process, which, regrettably, are countered by continuing Israeli rejection of the requirements for peace, primarily the full cessation of all settlement activities, in accordance with the commitments under the Road Map. Israel's escalation of its settlement policy, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, does not serve the goals of peace, but seeks to change the realities on the ground and to create a new reality to prejudge the final-status negotiations, hoping that the international community will stand silent in the face of attempts to seize Palestinian territory and to annex it de facto. However, the international community as a whole stands against Israel's settlement policies and is aware of its real endeavours and rejects them.

In this context, Egypt warns of the consequences of settlement and so-called natural growth activities, which not only hinder efforts to relaunch the peace process, but are also aimed at undermining the contiguity of the Palestinian territories and at obliterating the chances of achieving an international solution based on the existence of two States along the lines of the 1967 borders. Those activities call into question the credibility of the Israeli Government's commitment to the peace process, in particular because they directly contradict the main principle upon which the process was established — the principle of land for peace.

Egypt warns against Israel's intensifying endeavours to alter the features of occupied East Jerusalem and to separate it from its Arab and Palestinian surroundings through the confiscation and demolition of Palestinian homes and the construction of new settlement units, including the planned construction of 20 new housing units in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. Israel has also attempted to violate the sanctity of Islamic holy shrines in the city by issuing statements that Jerusalem, including all of its neighbourhoods, is the united capital of Israel. All of those actions clearly contradict United Nations resolutions repudiating all of Israel's attempts to annex East Jerusalem and declaring them null and void.

At the same time, international endeavours to attain a just and agreed solution to the long-term refugee problem must be intensified. Israel has tried to skirt that issue, in particular through recent increased talk within the Israeli Government of the concept of a Jewish State. Such talk has a negative impact on the entire Arab population of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Today more than ever, the international community must work to end Israel's violations and to compel it to comply with its obligations to protect Palestinian civilians and to work to promote peace and security in the Middle East.

Egypt encourages the efforts of the United States Government and welcomes the sincere desire of its President to work towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East by ending settlement activity and enshrining an objective vision of a two-State solution. Egypt also supports the efforts of the international Quartet, which has sent a clear message of solidarity with the two-State solution and supports the convening of a meeting in Moscow later this year to follow up on the implementation of the Annapolis process. Egypt will spare no effort to achieve Palestinian reconciliation through the Cairo dialogue leading to the reunification of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, under the legitimate leadership of the Palestinian Authority represented by President Abbas.

Egypt is also working on arrangements to allow the sustainable opening of the Gaza crossing points based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, an end to the collective punishment by Israel of the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, and the honest and full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

**Mr. Maurer** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to state my country's views on the situation in the Middle East. I will confine myself to a few aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I welcome and thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his very relevant briefing this morning.

Switzerland is deeply concerned about the current humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The recent war and its severe consequences have made the living conditions in that tiny and densely populated territory increasingly precarious. Those consequences have confronted the international community with a real emergency situation. The near impossibility of providing people with their basic needs, the lack of electricity, the limited supply of drinking water and the serious breakdown of the sewage treatment system are all causes for alarm.

Switzerland recalls that, in conformity with the obligations of international humanitarian law, Israel, as the occupying Power, must ensure access for humanitarian organizations to the civilian population and the supply of basic necessities. Sixty years after the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, respect for international humanitarian law remains our best response to the needs of the victims.

While respecting Israel's security imperatives, Switzerland believes that a concerted effort must be made to establish a mechanism to ensure humanitarian access and reconstruction. Such a mechanism — the development of which is called for in resolution 1860 (2009) — should be based on the framework for the provision of minimum humanitarian assistance to Gaza, proposed by the United Nations, and be coordinated by a technical committee providing for substantial and sustainable humanitarian access. Its frame of reference should be the four principles established by humanitarian practice and endorsed by the international community in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, that neutral, independent and international body should ensure the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip and establish a mechanism to monitor the importation of goods. Switzerland is willing to contribute to the establishment of such a body.

In the follow-up to a conflict, fact-finding missions to investigate allegations of violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law are a necessity for the victims. We believe that such missions ultimately help to bring about a lasting settlement to the conflict in question and contribute to preventing future violations. To achieve these two objectives, they must operate on the basis of a balanced mandate that takes into account the concerns of all the parties to a conflict as well as all kinds of violation.

That is the intention of the Goldstone mission, which was mandated by the Human Rights Council. We await with interest its report on the alleged violations committed by all parties to the conflict. It will then be necessary to determine the appropriate follow-up to the report.

We welcome the renewed commitment of the international community, in particular of the American administration, to actively promoting a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Peace Initiative of the Arab League and the determination of the State of Israel to achieve a lasting peace with its neighbours are encouraging signs. It is therefore essential that the international community be actively involved in helping put an end to that agonizing conflict.

The parameters of a settlement are already well known. A total freeze on the expansion of all settlements is a decisive factor for guaranteeing the peace process. The destruction in East Jerusalem of Palestinian houses situated near the old city and the planned eviction of Palestinian families must not happen. At the same time and in order to launch a genuine political process, it is essential to renounce violence. The halt to the rocket attacks against the Israeli civilian population must be maintained.

Switzerland is convinced that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be resolved by military means. The Clinton parameters, the Taba discussions and the Geneva initiative clearly indicate the path towards a solution. The creation of a viable Palestinian State living side by side with the State of Israel, existing within secure and internationally recognized borders, is therefore the only path that can lead to a lasting settlement of the conflict.

To conclude, I wish to stress the urgency and importance of creating a mechanism for humanitarian access and reconstruction in Gaza. We are counting on the support of the Security Council in this process and on the active participation of the Member States concerned and the relevant entities of the United Nations system.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Ms. Cordeiro Dunlop** (Brazil): I congratulate you on your timely decision to hold an open debate on the situation in the Middle East. The press has followed suit, as today's issue of a local newspaper shows on its front page. The format you have chosen vastly enhances the relevance and impact of the monthly briefings to the Security Council, as the wider membership is given an opportunity to convey its views on a subject of such importance. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his very comprehensive briefing.

More than seven months have passed since the ceasefire was agreed in the Gaza Strip, but the humanitarian situation there continues to be a source of grave concern. Access to basic goods remains clearly insufficient, and much-needed reconstruction has not been started due to the lack of building materials. The relative tranquillity that we currently observe in the Strip should not lead us to overlook the continued plight of its inhabitants. Behind the statistics of the Gaza war earlier this year, there are real men, women and children. They no longer suffer daily bombardments, but are still forced to live in entirely unacceptable conditions.

Brazil therefore reiterates the urgency of an international effort geared both at reconstructing Gaza and at meeting all the humanitarian needs of its population. Israel must fully abide by the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access and keep the border crossings open. At the same time, militant groups in Gaza must keep up the restraint they have shown recently and refrain from all acts of violence against the Israeli civilian population, especially in the southern areas.

With regard to the West Bank, we can only express satisfaction with recent Israeli efforts to ease movement and improve access to Israel. Such measures are positive and must continue. However, more is needed. It is crucial that Israel freeze all settlement activities, including those undertaken to accommodate natural growth, and dismantle the existing ones, mainly those built after 2000. This aspect is particularly relevant in East Jerusalem, where attempts to redraw the demographic map only further complicate an already very difficult situation. The construction of the wall — found to be illegal by an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice — must also come to a halt.

We need to foster social and economic development throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, while providing ways to defuse tension and lessen dissatisfaction with the limited possibilities of everyday life. In this sense, Brazil is making a contribution. We are currently building a sports centre in Ramallah, together with our partners in the India-Brazil-South Africa forum, and will bring two of the most prestigious Brazilian soccer teams to play for peace. Our experience has shown that sport is a useful instrument for creating hope and opportunities in impoverished areas.

In the diplomatic arena, there seem to be promising developments. The early and active involvement of the United States in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its continued support for the two-State solution are very welcome. Prime Minister Netanyahu's openness to the idea of a Palestinian State is also encouraging, although it must evolve in order to recognize the need to endow Palestine with the attributes of full statehood. If these promising signs are to bear the hoped-for fruit, sustained political will and true statesmanship will continue to be required.

This holds true for Palestinians as well. Brazil commends Egypt's efforts to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation, but if they are to succeed all parties must work in earnest to find common ground under the leadership of the Palestinian Authority. On the ability to overcome internal differences rests the possibility of building a truly independent and prosperous Palestinian State. History will not forgive those who fail to compromise in the search for unity, since without unity there can be no peace.

Brazil supports the 26 June declaration by the Quartet on the resumption of negotiations to end the conflict and reach a two-State solution based on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the Madrid terms of reference, the Road Map and all previous agreements. Such a solution is needed today, not tomorrow. As Minister Celso Amorim said in the Cairo conference on Gaza in February, it is time for peace, not for a peace process.

Such views were also conveyed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mr. Avigdor Lieberman, last week in Brazil. His visit was an expression of the productive bilateral relationship that exists between our two countries. It also provides evidence of my Government's willingness to contribute as much as possible to the achievement of a comprehensive peace. To the same end, the Brazilian Special Envoy to the Middle East, Ambassador Ouro-Preto, recently concluded another tour of the region during which, in a wide range of meetings, he expressed yet again Brazil's support for peace and the promotion of mutual understanding.

In the same spirit, the Brazilian Government, together with the United Nations Department of Public Information, has organized the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East under the theme "Promoting Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue — a view from South America", being held today and tomorrow in Rio de Janeiro. This event is bringing together politicians, journalists, intellectuals and members of civil society groups from Israel, Palestine, Brazil and other South American countries. The seminar is a gesture that embodies the spirit of openness and dialogue that needs to be taken up in the political and diplomatic arenas.

There are approximately 7 million Brazilians of Lebanese descent. It is therefore no surprise that we follow developments in that fellow country very closely. We congratulate the Lebanese political parties on their conduct of the recent elections and encourage them to continue the dialogue to form a broad-based and stable Government. We are particularly encouraged by the tireless efforts of President Sleiman to build trust among the main political forces in the country and thereby consolidate stability.

The arms cache recently discovered in southern Lebanon constitutes a clear violation of resolution 1701 (2006). It is crucial that all parties, without exception, abide by the terms of the resolution. It is also essential that all parties fully cooperate with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in the investigation of the incident.

My delegation believes that conditions more favourable than those of the recent past are being established to foster significant progress towards a solution to the conflict in the Middle East. They present an opportunity we must not miss. Brazil is willing and ready to do all in its power to help the parties.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

**Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia): Let me first express the appreciation of my delegation to you, Sir, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. We also wish to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, for his briefing on the latest developments in the region. In making this statement, Indonesia associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Council's debate today provides yet another vivid reminder of the continuing hardships prevalent in the occupied Palestinian territory and, not least, of the paucity of progress in the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Like others, Indonesia remains profoundly concerned by the depth of the humanitarian crisis that continues to permeate the Gaza Strip following the Israeli attacks of December 2008 and January 2009. While the worst of the military action may have stopped, the flow of food, medicine and reconstruction material allowed into Gaza remains grossly inadequate. The international community cannot allow that situation to continue. It must continue to speak as one in demanding that Israel open the border crossings to Gaza in order to allow reconstruction efforts and access to much-needed humanitarian supplies to ease the humanitarian crisis.

The litany of Israeli illegal practices is well chronicled. Few, however, are as great an affront to the prospects of peace and as great a hurdle to the peace process as its illegal settlement practices. Israel continues to build and expand illegal settlements, in the process demolishing Palestinian homes and other structures, confiscating lands and imposing checkpoints that arbitrarily restrict the movement of Palestinians. Despite the repeated protests of the international community, Israel persists in its efforts to change the character and legal status of East Jerusalem.

Indonesia once again condemns those settlement policies, which gravely undermine the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the occupied Palestinian territory and jeopardize the prospects for achieving the two-State solution for peace on the basis of the pre-1967 borders through the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

While Israel persists in its illegal settlement activities, Indonesia is encouraged by the ever-strengthening international consensus rejecting those activities and demanding an immediate halt to and the dismantling of those settlements.

Indeed, while Israel remains deaf to the international exhortation to live up to its commitment to a two-State solution to the conflict, Indonesia draws encouragement from a number of recent significant developments. First, there is a renewed sense of urgency in the intra-Palestinian reconciliation talks, facilitated by the Government of Egypt. We wish to underscore the importance of making progress in those efforts, which are aimed at promoting Palestinian unity.

Secondly, there has been a practical demonstration of the commitment of the international community to the cause of peace in Palestine through pledges of material assistance, as evidenced at the International Conference on the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 2 March 2009.

Thirdly, there has been a stepping up of diplomatic activity with the objective of restarting negotiations. In that regard, we acknowledge in particular the vigorous efforts being made by the United States and the continued engagement of the Quartet.

Indonesia, for its part, remains consistent in calling for a settlement based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Our support of statehood for Palestine is steadfast — statehood, we wish to emphasize, with all its attributes.

A truly comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East requires not only a solution to the question of Palestine, but also progress on the Israel-Lebanon and Israel-Syria tracks. In that connection, we continue to demand that Israel comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. Similarly, we continue to be concerned by Israel's ongoing air and land violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006), and we call on Israel to withdraw completely from the remaining Lebanese occupied land.

**The President**: I now call on the representative of Sweden.

**Mr. Lidén** (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. In addition, the following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Iceland and Ukraine.

Developments over the past year have made it abundantly clear that we must move swiftly towards a renewal of the peace process in the Middle East. The European Union remains committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of international law; the relevant Security Council resolutions; the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including land for peace; the Road Map; the agreements previously reached by the parties; and the Annapolis process, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative. We remain equally committed to the two-State solution, with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, comprising the West Bank and Gaza, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

We welcome the United States Administration's commitment to pursue vigorously a two-State solution and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The European Union is ready to work with the parties to the conflict, as well as with the United States, other Quartet members and Arab partners, to achieve that goal.

Both parties must now take concrete measures to resume peace negotiations, respecting previous agreements and understandings.

The continued settlement activities, house demolitions and evictions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem, remain a serious concern for the European Union. We urge the Government of Israel to immediately end those settlement activities, including so-called natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001. The European Union reiterates that the settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. If there is to be genuine peace, a way must be found to share Jerusalem as the capital of two States. The European Union will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

A durable solution to the Gaza crisis has to be achieved through the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The European Union remains gravely concerned at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for the immediate and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. Reconstruction and economic recovery have to be allowed, and the current humanitarian crisis must be resolved.

All violence must stop, including rocket attacks on Israel. An effective mechanism to prevent the smuggling of arms and ammunition into the Gaza Strip should be put in place. We call on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

We call upon the Government of Israel to work unequivocally towards the two-State solution. The European Union welcomes the initial step, announced by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, of commitment to a peace that would include a Palestinian State.

We call upon the Palestinian Authority to continue to make every effort to improve law and order in territories under its control, and we welcome steps taken so far. All parties must stop incitement and violence against civilians, and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights must be ensured. The European Union will continue to follow closely investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

The European Union calls upon the Palestinians to step up the intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts in support of President Mahmoud Abbas. We support the mediation by Egypt and the Arab League. Palestinians should quickly overcome their divisions and find common ground on the basis of non-violence, with a view to preserving the prospects for the creation of a future State. Reconciliation will facilitate the reconstruction in Gaza and the organization of elections.

The European Union will promote Palestinian State-building and intensify work in partnership with the Palestinian Authority on reforms. The efforts of the Palestinian Authority to develop an effective and reformed security sector are positive. We will cooperate towards additional improvement. Civilian police and the judicial sector will continue to be a focus of European Union support.

The declared readiness of the Government of Israel to promote Palestinian economic development is a positive sign. This should be carried out within the framework of the broader perspective of the two-State solution. The European Union welcomes the positive steps recently taken by the Israeli authorities regarding the easing of restrictions on the West Bank. We look forward to further and sustained improvements in movement and access in all of the occupied Palestinian territories. The Agreement on Movement and Access of 2005 must be fully implemented. The European Union is ready to work closely with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and international donors in order to achieve sustainable development of the Palestinian economy.

The European Union will contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, while also addressing the regional economic and security dimensions. We call on all partners in the international community to contribute actively to the achievement of a comprehensive settlement. Arab countries and other partners should be forthcoming, both politically and financially, in assisting the Palestinian Authority. In line with the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative, the European Union invites Israel and all Arab countries to take confidence-building measures in order to stimulate mutual trust and to create an atmosphere conducive to conflict resolution.

A lasting settlement of the conflicts between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon should be pursued in parallel, creating mutually reinforcing processes. The European Union expects Syria and Israel to resume peace negotiations.

The European Union congratulates the people of Lebanon on the successful holding of parliamentary elections, which is an important step in the democratic development of the country. At the same time and in the light of some worrying recent developments in southern Lebanon, which also affect the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the European Union reiterates its call to all the parties to fully abide by and implement the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006).

In the light of further developments at the political level and on the ground, the European Union stands ready to support concrete and early results on the path to a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Zainuddin** (Malaysia): The situation in the Middle East, especially the question of Palestine, remains of concern, with no progress or clear view of a durable and lasting peace leading to a two-State solution. It is my delegation's hope that our meeting today will assist in changing this status quo and will enable the relevant parties to re-start negotiations in good faith towards finding a lasting solution to this issue, which has long beleaguered the international community, and more so the Middle East, particularly Palestine. In this regard, we thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for giving us this opportunity to participate in this open debate. Allow me to also congratulate you, Sir, for your presidency of the Council for the month of July.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement by Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

For genuine progress to be made on the Middle East peace process, including a resumption of peace negotiations, all parties must demonstrate honesty and sincerity aimed at achieving the objective of a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on a two-State solution, the relevant Security Council resolutions, including 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the Arab Peace Initiative. Words must be matched with actions to reflect this genuine desire.

Unfortunately, the negative signals from Israel, from statements by its leaders to actions in the Gaza Strip and inaction on halting illegal settlement activities in the occupied territories, among others, are indicators that Israel is not in any way close to reflecting any intent or desire to find a durable and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, including a two-State solution. It baffles us all that while, on the one hand, it seems to agree to a two-State solution, on the other hand, illegal Israeli settlements continue to be built in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Palestinian lands are also illegally confiscated, including through the building of the separation wall, which continues to be built despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on stopping its construction. Not only has the construction of settlements not been halted and they have not been demolished, there is even a caveat for allowing their expansion due to natural growth. Would not allowing these settlements to expand for natural growth presuppose that these illegal settlements are accepted as a permanent feature in the occupied Palestinian territories? Would not that then violate the various Security Council resolutions that call for Israel to return to the 1967 border and run counter to achieving a two-State solution and a comprehensive lasting and durable peace?

Clearly the calls by the international community, including by one of the major partners, to stop these illegal settlements has not been heeded. The building of these settlements, let alone their expansion for whatever reasons, violates all international laws and norms and various Council resolutions. We continue to call on Israel to cease constructing these settlements in the occupied land and to return it to the Palestinians. We urge the Council, in particular, to ensure that Israel abides by the relevant Council resolutions in this regard and to desist from changing the facts on the ground.

Despite the almost seven months since the Israeli onslaught on Gaza that saw devastating consequences for the life of the Palestinian people in Gaza and its infrastructure, the humanitarian situation remains dire. Israeli imposed a blockade on Gaza, through access by land, air and sea, perpetually imprisoning the people of Gaza in an open prison and depriving them, especially children, women and the elderly, of daily essentials.

While international efforts are afoot trying to rebuild what was destroyed by Israel, humanitarian aid and personnel continue to be largely restricted from entering Gaza, and in many ways the area is strangled and its inhabitants isolated from the outside world. Such action grossly violates international humanitarian law on ensuring the protection of civilians. In this regard, we again urge the Council to take the necessary action to end this siege on Gaza and to allow the movement of goods, including humanitarian aid, into Gaza. Compensation must also be made to the people in Gaza by those responsible for the casualties and destruction to homes and infrastructure.

The actions by Israel have thus far not reflected a genuine and honest desire to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine based on a two-State solution. All parties must fulfil their roles as honest parties to this peace process, lest we remain in the state we are in now, far from seeing peace in the Middle East and a solution to the Palestinian question. The price for the international community if peace is not achieved is high and higher still for the people in the Middle East, especially the Palestinians.

We urge the Security Council to take the necessary and appropriate action to ensure all parties resume the peace negotiations. On this note also, Malaysia supports the recent proposal by the European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy regarding the need for the Security Council to set a deadline on resolving the question of Palestine and on the eventual creation of a Palestinian State by the United Nations.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

**Mr. Al Nafisee** (Saudi Arabia): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the Ugandan presidency of the Council for organizing this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing on this issue.

No regional crisis has greater potential to affect other regional conflicts than the Arab-Israeli conflict in Middle East. It has overshadowed and dominated all other issues in the Middle East for the past six decades. This situation has created a climate conducive to the development of extremism and the spread of terrorism, while hampering regional development, modernization and reform.

Saudi Arabia, along with other Arab Governments, has made its commitment to peace loud and clear in the Arab Peace Initiative. We have continued to affirm our commitment to a just and comprehensive peace based on international law.

Unfortunately, on the other side, no reciprocal commitment has yet been forthcoming from Israel. It is very crucial to stress the importance of reviving the peace process and Israeli seriousness and truthfulness towards the peace process, including the immediate cessation of the building of settlements or their expansion.

The status quo in the situation in the city of Gaza is another factor exacerbating the problem in that besieged city. The call on Israel to withdraw its forces from all occupied lands, including the Golan in Syria and the Sheba'a farm lands and Kafr Shouba in Lebanon, must go hand-in-hand with the overall peace plan in the region.

Saudi Arabia welcomes the effort of President Obama's Administration to push for a comprehensive peace plan and the establishment of a sovereign State for the Palestinian people, living side-by-side with the State of Israel.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

**Mr. Al-Allaf** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first of all like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing this morning.

Jordan associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt earlier today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

During its ministerial meeting held on 11 May (see S/PV.6123), the Security Council sent a clear message to all parties concerned about peace in the Middle East. The Council reiterated the urgent need to restore peace to the region in accordance with the two-State solution and previous agreements and obligations. We are meeting today not just to reiterate the importance of that message, but also to emphasize that, given developments in the region in recent months, now is the appropriate time to achieve tangible and genuine progress in the Arab-Israeli conflict, so as to produce concrete results on the ground. If we let this opportunity pass us by, there will be catastrophic consequences for the region and its peoples, the peace and security of Israelis and Palestinians and international peace and security as a whole.

Finding a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, which is at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East, is the key to the overall solution of other problems in the region. Any solution must be based on Security Council resolutions and the terms of reference adopted at international conferences with regard to the Palestinian problem. In particular, it must be based on resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), which reiterated that an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be based on the two-State solution. We must therefore intensify efforts and embark upon serious Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Those negotiations must take place according to a properly defined timetable and be based on a clear and acceptable plan to achieve a peaceful resolution and ensure security for Israel.

Under the guidance of His Majesty King Abdullah II, Jordan is certainly prepared to make every effort to support that undertaking, so as to launch negotiations to establish a contiguous, viable and independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with agreed international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, which is the main starting point to deal with the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Now is a good opportunity to do that, given regional and international efforts to find a solution to the conflict in the region. However, Israel is continuing its unilateral policy in an effort to impose a fait accompli on the occupied territories. Israeli plans to establish new settlements, in particular in East Jerusalem, and its expansion of existing settlements, are totally unacceptable. Attempts to create a new situation on the ground clearly violate both international humanitarian law and the commitments that Israel entered into under the Road Map. They also increase tensions in the region and jeopardize the chances of finding a just and lasting solution and for establishing a viable Palestinian State.

If Israel truly wants to demonstrate its sincerity about moving towards peace, it must immediately halt all settlement activity and dismantle all illegal settlement outposts. Israel must not alter East Jerusalem, and must end its policy of Judaizing Al-Quds and changing its historic Islamic character. It must stop its excavations near Al-Haram Al-Sharif and must cease destroying houses and erecting barriers. It must end its confiscation of land and all other acts that could have a negative impact on a peaceful settlement. Such acts also run counter to international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

As a country of the region, we have taken note of the positive impact of President Obama's message delivered in Cairo, in particular as regards the commitment of the United States to a two-State solution, to find comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to improve relations with the Arab and Muslim world. In that regard, Special Envoy George Mitchell is making an effort in the region. It is extremely important to support and build on all such efforts, as well as to give them every chance of success.

In line with its responsibilities under international humanitarian law, the international community must act immediately to halt the ongoing humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. That includes lifting the blockade stifling the Palestinian people, who should also be provided with the necessary assistance to address their difficult circumstances, imposed by the occupation. The deteriorating humanitarian situation of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is also resulting in increased despair and frustration, both in the region and in the Arab and Muslim world. That will have an impact on security, stability and peace efforts throughout the region.

Under the guidance of King Abdullah II, Jordan will continue to make every possible effort to encourage international stakeholders to end the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza. Voluntary Jordanian organizations will also continue to deliver the necessary aid to our brothers in the Palestinian territories.

Achieving peace in the Middle East is not just a cherished goal of the countries concerned. That goal has now taken on an international dimension as well, given its impact on international peace and security. Resolving the conflict will be to the benefit of all parties, and of the entire international community. We must seize this historic opportunity to achieve peace in the region, for the region must have peace.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for allowing us to participate in today's debate on the situation in the Middle East.

Despite the passage of years, the succession of Governments, the plethora of initiatives and the deep and unprecedented changes in international relations, the Palestinian situation and the Middle East crisis continue unchanged, awaiting a comprehensive and just settlement and the realization of hopes and aspirations for stability, security and cooperation.

All relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly emphasize the right of the Palestinian people to establish a viable and independent State, the need for Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967 and respect the status and character of Jerusalem, and the illegality of all of Israel's administrative and legal measures, including the confiscation of land and the construction of settlements. Yet, the lives of the Palestinian people are unchanged and the suffering of the Palestinians, due to displacement, the siege, starvation, the imposition of checkpoints and border crossings and the lack of access and movement, continues.

The Palestinian Authority has demonstrated its sincere willingness to achieve peace. It has taken a positive part in all negotiations and has honoured all its commitments — proof that it is a true partner for peace. Yet Israel has countered this willingness with procrastination and has continued its oppressive practices aimed at compelling the Palestinian people to give in.

All United Nations recent reports and all the hearings of the Human Rights Council and its June and July investigation into the incidents in Gaza have documented Israel's practice of deliberately targeting innocent Palestinian civilians. Testimony to that effect has been given by some Israeli soldiers. Despite the passage of six months since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), the Palestinians are still awaiting the full implementation of that resolution.

As regards Jerusalem, Israel continues its efforts to Judaize the Holy City in order to undermine its historical and religious nature as a Holy City which represents coexistence and convergence among all sacred religions.

The serious and tragic situation in the Middle East requires the international community and the Security Council to make intensive efforts to compel Israel to resume the negotiations from the point at which they were halted and to take practical and tangible steps commensurate with the gravity of the situation. Chief among these is the cessation of settlement activity, which runs counter to all international resolutions and to the commitments undertaken by Israel under the Road Map.

As for the Arab side, it has continued to emphasize its political will to achieve comprehensive peace. It has put forward the Arab Peace Initiative, which is serious and practical, offering a comprehensive vision for the Middle East based on coexistence, good-neighbourliness and mutual cooperation.

The Kingdom of Morocco appreciates the principled position expressed by the new United States Administration vis-à-vis the two-State solution and the necessity of putting an end to the settlements. We also appreciate Washington's repeated endeavours to urge all States to return to the negotiating table.

In that connection, we salute the positive position enunciated by the Quartet at its joint meeting last month with the League of Arab States Follow-up

Committee on the implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative.

His Majesty the King of Morocco, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, believes in peaceful negotiations and dialogue as the best means to achieve peaceful coexistence and peace. He continues to support this vision and to support efforts to achieve the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

In a few weeks the world will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That will be an opportunity to recall the injustice and the problems to which the Palestinians have been subjected. It is time for the international community to shoulder its responsibility towards the Palestinian people with a view to achieving a comprehensive and just peace agreement and settlement — for which all people of the region yearn.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

**Ms. Espinosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time my country is speaking under your presidency, I would like to extend to you, Sir, the congratulations of Ecuador and our support in your leadership of the work of the Council this month.

We would also like to thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his complete briefing on the situation in Palestine and in the Middle East. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The position of Ecuador on the Palestinian question is well known to the entire international community, but we cannot fail to speak out whenever necessary to condemn the serious humanitarian and security situation to which the Palestinian civilian population continues to be subjected as a direct consequence of Israel's aggression and its occupation of the Palestinian territory.

It is regrettable to note that almost seven months since the most recent massive Israeli intervention in Gaza and despite the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1860 (2009) and the subsequent adoption of resolutions by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, there still has not been "an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza" (*resolution 1860 (2009), para. 1*) or "the unimpeded provision and distribution ... of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment" (*para. 2*). Nor have there been any specific sanctions as a result of investigations carried out by competent United Nations bodies into "the grave human rights violations committed in the occupied Palestine territories", especially during last January's attacks.

More than half a year has passed, and yet there continues to be a border blockade on the provision of humanitarian assistance, food, medicine, fuel and construction material. There is also an ongoing ban on the free movement of civilians, many of them women and children or sick people. There has also been selective destruction of public and private property, which has exacerbated the emergency humanitarian situation which has never ceased in the Gaza Strip, as recognized by specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations present in the region.

That is why, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Ecuador, Rafael Correa Delgado, I wish to reiterate the solidarity of the Ecuadorian Government and people with all the innocent victims of the ongoing Israeli aggression and, at the same time, to urgently appeal to Council members to immediately resolve the humanitarian crisis and resume the search for an enduring solution and a lasting peace in the region, through the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including those I mentioned earlier.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Ecuador advocates the peaceful solution of international disputes and conflicts and emphatically rejects the threat or the use of force as a mechanism to resolve them. Therefore, Ecuador believes that any comprehensive solution that will make it possible to achieve and maintain a lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be reached by military means, but only through ongoing dialogue, the strictest respect for international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and, above all, a true commitment to non-aggression and reconciliation that includes Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Regrettably, in recent weeks, the world has seen that the efforts of the Quartet on Middle East negotiations, particularly during its most recent meeting, held in Trieste on 26 June, in seeking a lasting peace with the recognition of two independent States, have in no way been echoed in the State of Israel. On the contrary, we have heard the Israeli authorities insist on their plans for settlements on Palestinian territory and close the door to the possibility for a future space for the establishment of a Palestinian State in their customary arrogance towards and isolation from the international community.

My country believes that, without prejudice to the aforementioned efforts and the noteworthy initiatives of Egypt and the League of Arab States and the statements in other forums, such as the Group of Eight it is primarily the responsibility of this Organization to seek and implement all the measures provided for in the United Nations Charter to pressure the occupying Power, Israel, to stop violating existing international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law.

That responsibility must be shouldered by the entire international community through coordinated actions in different multilateral and bilateral organs and bodies towards building a lasting peace not only for the benefit of the peoples of Palestine and Israel, but for the whole region. My country is ready to offer its ongoing support for such actions.

On the broader issue, I would also like to say how pleased my Government is with the progress in the diplomatic negotiations with Syria and Lebanon and with the progressive establishment of security in the latter country. We trust that the timely formation of a new Government that represents all the communities in that country will strengthen it.

Lastly, I am pleased to express my Government's support for the strengthening of the Arab Peace Initiative and the appeal to all parties to the conflict to respect their commitments under the Road Map, while reiterating that any comprehensive solution must sooner or later include dialogue and direct negotiation between Israel and Palestine.

The victims of the serious humanitarian situation in Palestine deserve that the United Nations and the Security Council and all its members shoulder their responsibility and take the action necessary to lay the foundations for the creation of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, the restoration of lasting peace and security in the Middle East, and full enjoyment by all inhabitants, irrespective of their nationality, of their fundamental rights.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mrs. Pino Rivero** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba endorses the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The situation in the Middle East resulting from the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories, which has continued since 1967, remains a matter of great concern not only to the region, but also to the entire international community.

Cuba regrets the lack of progress, despite the increasing international efforts and the resumption of the peace process in late November 2007, in addressing the main issues and in pursuing the key positions on the Palestinian question. We would also like to express our great concern at the serious deterioration in the situation and in the critical political, economic, social, humanitarian and security conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, owing to the ongoing illegal policies and practices by Israel, the occupying Power.

Israel must immediately cease military aggression against the Palestinian people. Our delegation underscores the importance of achieving a permanent ceasefire starting in the Gaza Strip and extending to the West Bank, and expresses its support for Egypt's efforts in that regard.

We reiterate our condemnation of Israel's inhumane and illegal closure and blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in the imprisonment of the entire Palestinian civilian population by obstructing its freedom of movement, including that of the sick, students and humanitarian personnel; by hampering access to humanitarian aid and basic necessities, such as food, medicines, fuel, electricity and building materials; and by blocking all trade.

It is time for Israel to cease such illegal practices against the Palestinian people and permanently put an end to its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, allowing the immediate and permanent opening of all border crossings in the Gaza Strip, and permitting movement to and from the territory of the persons and goods needed to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and to effect the immediate reconstruction and economic recovery of the Palestinian people.

The situation in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory continues to be a source of great concern. In that regard, we condemn Israel's ongoing intensive campaign to establish settlements, including the confiscation of vast tracts of land; the construction and expansion of illegal settlements and their outposts and infrastructure; the transfer of additional Israeli settlers; the building of the wall; the demolition of homes; the excavations; and the imposition of arbitrary and racist restrictions on residency and movement through a system of permits and checkpoints throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem. Such policies and measures by Israel are grave violations of international law and a flagrant challenge to the United Nations resolutions and the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

We emphasize the incompatibility of peace process negotiations with such illegal settlement activities, which are clearly aimed at illegally acquiring and, de facto, annexing more Palestinian territory and forcibly imposing a unilateral solution. We harbour the hope that the ongoing efforts to achieve reconciliation and unity in Palestine will soon reach their objectives, for the benefit of the Palestinian people.

We reiterate our call for the prompt solution of the issue of the Sheba'a farms in full respect for Lebanese territorial integrity, as stipulated by resolution 1701 (2006). We urge all parties to cooperate in protecting the sovereign rights of Lebanon in that area, and we note the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard.

Similarly, we reaffirm that any measure or action taken, or to be taken, by Israel, the occupying Power, aimed at changing the legal, physical or demographic condition or the institutional infrastructure of the occupied Syrian Golan, and any measures by Israel to impose its jurisdiction and administration in that territory, have no legal effect. It is now time for Israel to comply with resolution 497 (1981) and to withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

Cuba will continue to support and to contribute actively in every possible sphere to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh): I shall deliver this statement on behalf of our Permanent Representative, but before doing so I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which is of vital importance. I also wish to convey my appreciation to Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his very informative and comprehensive briefing this morning.

I also wish to state that the Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, I also wish briefly to make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

Bangladesh has always been committed to the cause of Palestine. It maintains affirmed solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and statehood. Our solidarity with the Palestinian cause and support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are constant and unwavering. Bangladesh reiterates its long-standing position that the continued occupation of Palestine is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental rights to self-determination and to live freely in their own land. We believe that the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital is the only sustainable solution to this long-lasting conflict.

Bangladesh condemns Israel's illegal settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, which undermines the Palestinian territory's unity and contiguity. All concerned parties should call for an immediate freeze on the expansion of Jewish settlements, as well as for the dismantling of the existing ones in the occupied territories.

Another major cause for concern is the unilateral blockade imposed by the Israeli authorities. Such repressive measures affect the lives and livelihoods of the Palestinian people. Consequently, their social, political and economic institution-building stands crippled. Such injustice cannot be allowed to continue and must be rolled back in the interest of the free movement of people and access by the humanitarian agencies. It is necessary to rededicate ourselves to the Palestinian cause of self-determination and statehood, and to work together to bring that aspiration to fruition.

While Bangladesh welcomes the various initiatives and efforts undertaken on Palestine to date, it emphasizes that the lack of progress on those initiatives should not deter us from renewing our commitment to and intensifying our efforts for a permanent solution to this long-standing issue. We need to seize every opportunity and take measures to ensure that Israel and its patrons comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine. All concerned must comply with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, must undertake the necessary measures to ensure the full and effective implementation of that resolution.

The continuous defiance and blatant disregard of international law demonstrated by the occupying Power should be addressed by all concerned, including the Security Council and the international community. Effective measures should be taken to oblige the occupants to comply with international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Road Map. We should demand that the Quartet assume greater responsibility in steering the peace process and in ensuring Israel's compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions and principles of international law.

As we continue to reiterate and strengthen our support for the Palestinian issue and for the long-standing human tragedy associated with it, we believe that the unity and solidarity of the Palestinians need to be preserved by all means. Otherwise, the whole effort to achieve the goal of founding an independent Palestinian State will be delayed.

Bangladesh firmly believes that a comprehensive and just settlement is the key to peace in the Middle East. The relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Middle East Road Map can be viewed as the guiding principles in this regard. Bangladesh hopes that all parties involved will take a pragmatic approach to this issue for the early implementation of the Road Map for Peace in the Middle East.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

**Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to extend to you, Sir, and through you the brotherly Republic of Uganda, our sincere congratulations on your presidency of the Security Council this month. We pay tribute to your leadership and your efforts to crown the Council's various deliberations with success.

I also wish to congratulate the delegation of brotherly Turkey on its able and successful presidency of the work of the Security Council last month.

This open debate of the Security Council provides Member States with the opportunity to address the very important issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. It is an opportunity to recall the historical responsibility of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Palestinian question and for Member States to give momentum to efforts aimed at moving the peace process forward and reinvigorating the recent endeavours of many influential actors to resolve differences in the region.

Under the leadership of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia attaches great importance to the question of Palestine.

His Excellency the President has consistently affirmed our unswerving position on the Palestinian question and has always stressed that, as in the past, we shall always stand alongside the brotherly Palestinian people in its just struggle to retrieve its legitimate national rights and establish an independent State of its own on its national soil. We also support the strategic choice of peace and have always contributed to every effort intended to find a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question in conformity with resolutions of international legitimacy and the terms of reference of the peace process, including the Arab Peace Initiative.

In that connection, we welcome the positive position set out by the new United States Administration regarding the peace process and the vision of two States living side by side in peace. We call again on the international community and on the Quartet to intensify their efforts and resume negotiations on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, which, with international support, has now become one of the principal terms of reference for peace.

There is international consensus that peace must inevitably be brought about through negotiations. This requires coordinated efforts by the entire international community to overcome the obstacles in the way of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We have been encouraged by some hopeful indications that the Middle East impasse will soon come to an end, but we are duty-bound to draw attention to the ongoing dangerous Israeli practices towards the brotherly Palestinian people. Those practices deprive the Palestinian people of the legitimate rights they are guaranteed by all relevant international instruments and resolutions. The continuing settlement policy and the imposition of a blockade on the Palestinian people hinder efforts towards a settlement and towards peace. They harden the obstacles preventing the resumption of negotiations, which must be built on trust and on the commitment of all parties to honour their commitments under existing agreements and the principal terms of reference.

In discussing the situation in the Middle East we cannot fail to recall the need for Israel to withdraw from all occupied Syrian and Lebanese territories, in order to attain the goal of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis in all its aspects in a manner that will bring security and stability to all the peoples of the region.

Today's debate should provide an opportunity for us to work in a more holistic and effective manner to address everything that endangers peace in the Middle East, in particular in the wake of Israel's oppressive aggression against Gaza, which caused vast loss of life and the destruction of vital Palestinian infrastructure and institutions. It also provides an opportunity for Member States to contribute to peace efforts, work to achieve a settlement and put an end to the pain of a people that has been suffering for more than six decades and has been deprived of its fundamental rights.

We look forward to the day when the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and the hopes of the international community will give rise to tangible efforts to pave the way to peace, independence and sovereignty for the Palestinian people. This will eliminate tension in the region and lead to a new era of security, stability and advancement.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you, Sir, and your country on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning.

The right of conquest is viewed as an offence to human rights, to the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples and to the norms governing relations among nations, including the inadmissibility of the seizure of territory by force. We thought it had been eliminated with the end of the age of colonization by the Western Powers and with the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations, but in the twenty-first century it appears still to be enjoyed by Israel in the Middle East. A colonial Power had only to put a handful of men on the territory to be colonized to view itself as endowed with the right of conquest — a right that, even before it was actually exercised, made that Power the master of the territory to be conquered. The natural inhabitants of the territory, once the owners of their ancestral lands, came to live in utterly precarious, depressing and miserable conditions — if they survived the conquering Power's genocide.

That is the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli violations that flout the very basis of the modern-day international legal order are a fundamental transgression of the basic norms of international law, which possess the character of *jus cogens*. These basic norms are the legitimate concern of the entire community of nations; all peoples can appeal to them and have an interest in safeguarding them and ensuring their implementation.

Early last week, in defiance of the international community and in particular the Security Council, the Government of Israel asserted a unified Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people and of the State of Israel and that its sovereignty in Jerusalem was not a matter for discussion.

During the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel seized East Jerusalem as war booty. Then, in 1980, it adopted national legislation encompassing the eastern and western parts of the city, proclaiming this as its eternal and invisible capital. That measure is illegal under resolution 478 (1980) and illegal in the eyes of the General Assembly, which has reaffirmed that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, that have altered or purported to alter the character, legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem are null and void and have no validity whatsoever, in particular the so-called Basic Law on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and that such measures must be reversed.

Nonetheless, and in spite of United Nations resolutions declaring the illegality of Israeli actions in East Jerusalem, tension has continued to rise after more than 40 years of occupation. This is a result of Israel's destructive and provocative policies and actions, through its settlement campaign throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. This is under way primarily in Jerusalem, where Israel continues fiercely to wage its final conquest and colonization of the city and the neighbouring areas. The isolation of Jerusalem from the remainder of the occupied Palestinian territory, the Judaization of the city and the destruction of its original demographic composition and its historical and cultural heritage, along with the expansion of illegal settlements at an unprecedented pace, constitute an ongoing violation of articles 49 and 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The continued occupation has further exacerbated the situation of the Palestinian people, which has already been precarious since the construction of the wall that has dismembered its territory, isolated its various areas and separated East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. This has led to a serious physical, economic, cultural and social disaster.

The building of the wall was the subject of an International Court of Justice advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, which stated that the wall being erected by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and its environs, was counter to international law and that Israel was obligated to end its non-compliance with international law and to immediately halt construction work on the wall and to immediately dismantle existing structures.

With regard to the Gaza Strip, there has been no progress since the end of the Israeli military operation seven months ago. The inhabitants of Gaza cannot rebuild their lives. The majority of the population of 1.5 million is having extreme difficulty making it to the end of the month. Seriously ill people are suffering because they cannot access medical treatment. Many children are suffering from serious psychological problems. Civilians whose homes and possessions were destroyed during the conflict cannot recover. In short, the blockade imposed by Israel three years ago remains unchanged and the United Nations does nothing. Poverty in Gaza is directly related to the blockade.

In order to prevent the misery from increasing with every passing day and to enable people to rebuild their lives, the restrictions on movement and goods must be lifted. The uninterrupted occupation of Arab territories by Israel in implementation of its policy of conquest and expansion is an ongoing violation of the United Nations Charter. Unfortunately, the Security Council has adopted no effective measures to put an end to Israel's illegal actions. It has permitted continued violation of the status of the city and its residents and helped dim the prospects for peace, which is essential to the future of Jerusalem. An agreement between both interested parties that recognizes East Jerusalem as the capital of the new Palestinian State is essential to achieving lasting peace.

We must underscore the extreme urgency of these matters and once again reiterate that the Council, on the basis of its own as yet unimplemented resolutions, must comply with its obligations under the Charter and act against the illegal actions of the occupying Power, Israel, in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We hope that the day is coming when Israeli actions with regard to Jerusalem will respect and recognize the etymology of the city, whose name derives from the Hebrew for "house of peace" or from the Arabic, Al-Quds, which means "sacred site". Nicaragua calls for a politically just solution to the Palestinian problem based on numerous United Nations resolutions, including the resolution establishing the right of return for Palestinian refugees and those resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, in accordance with the principle of land for peace, established at the Madrid conference and in the Arab Peace Initiative, which will allow for the creation of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

There is universal consensus that the Palestinian people must not remain under occupation. Israeli colonialism must end. The Palestinian people must exercise their inalienable rights and the State of Palestine must be established immediately. We reiterate that only with the establishment of the two States, Palestine and Israel, and with an end to Israeli occupation of occupied Arab territories will there be just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Once again, Nicaragua wishes to express its support for and solidarity with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Government of Lebanon as they seek territorial unity for their respective States and consequently an end to Israeli occupation in those territories.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

**Ms. Enge** (Norway): Norway fully supports the current efforts to resume final status negotiations. A political framework for a two-State solution based on the Road Map is necessary in order to mobilize broad international support for Palestinian State-building. Without such a political framework, we fear that international support may be eroded. The time has come to hold the parties to account and to demand that they honour their Road Map commitments and other key obligations. Without tangible improvements on the ground, the work of the negotiators will be undermined and public support for the two-State solution will evaporate.

Norway strongly supports Egyptian efforts to heal the internal division among Palestinians. We commend Egypt for its patience and hard work in trying to find a political solution that will make it possible for a legitimate Palestinian Government to be in full control of both Gaza and the West Bank.

The situation of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip is unacceptable. In January this year, the Security Council called on Member States to support international efforts to alleviate the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza, including through the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. For life in Gaza to improve, the civilian population must be allowed freedom of movement. For the economy in Gaza to revive, the import and export of goods must be restored. Norway urges the Government of Israel to reconsider its policy towards the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, Norway demands an end to the indiscriminate firing of rockets and mortars against Israeli civilians and the immediate release of Corporal Gilad Shalit; now in his third year of captivity.

In view of Norway's role as chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee — the international donor group supporting the Palestinian Authority — let me make a few observations focused on the connection between the political and the economic aspects of the peace process.

First, we must all act on our long-held understanding that economic progress in the Palestinian territory is essential to bringing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end. The institutions of the Palestinian Authority are the foundation of the future Palestinian State. Through timely budgetary support from major donors, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has staved off the impending crisis for now. However, a considerable remaining gap must be filled to enable the Palestinian Authority to pay salaries and utility bills throughout the year. Western and Arab donors alike should therefore honour their pledges from the donor conferences of Paris and Sharm el-Sheikh.

On the other hand — and this is my second point — the parties are ill-advised to take the donors for granted. The international donor community's support to the Palestinian Territory is in essence political, not humanitarian. Our aim is to facilitate the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. Without the political endgame in clear view, donor commitment at current levels can hardly be sustained.

Third, donor dependency is not a solution, while private value generation is. Let us not forget that, 10 years ago, the Palestinian Authority ran a budget surplus. Israel must lift restrictions on commercial flows to, from and within all parts of the Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip. The many roadblocks that literally stand in the way of economic development must be removed, in accordance with Israel's international obligations.

Finally, let me conclude by turning to the work of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. The June meeting in Oslo took stock of the grave economic situation of the Palestinian Authority. The meeting sought to identify measures that would underpin sustainable economic growth in the Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip, and mobilize much-needed budget support for the Palestinian Authority. The next Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting will take place in New York in the margins of the opening of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

One of the objectives of the upcoming Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in New York is to provide Prime Minister Fayyad with an opportunity to lay out his recently announced vision for establishing a Palestinian State within a two-year time frame. Norway is pledging its full support for Prime Minister Fayyad's vision. We expect Prime Minister Fayyad to use the occasion in New York to explain to donors in some detail how they can help turn his vision into reality.

We, the donors, in close coordination with the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet, should be prepared to act on these proposals, mindful that the next couple of years may be our last chance in the foreseeable future to salvage the two-State solution.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin, Sir, by joining other speakers in congratulating you on the skill with which you have presided over the Security Council this month and in thanking you for having convened this timely open debate. I also wish to extend our thanks to Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing to the Council this morning.

Like every single other day in the past six decades, the period under review has been witness to an unabated bloody campaign and racist and aggressive policies and practices by the Israeli regime. The defenceless Palestinians continue to be subject to some of the most vicious measures ever employed and to abhorrent war crimes perpetrated by Israelis, as a result of which dozens more Palestinian civilians have been killed or injured and more and more have been displaced.

In violation of the most basic principles of international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law, and in clear contempt for and defiance of the unambiguous calls made by the international community, the Israeli regime's illegal colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories continues, the demolition of Palestinian homes and properties and confiscation of Palestinian lands have intensified, and the construction of settlements and settlement infrastructure, as well as the transfer of Israeli settlers, have increased.

At the same time, and despite United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the construction of the illegal apartheid wall is continuing unabated, bringing more and more brutal damage to Palestinian lives, livelihoods, lands, freedom and property. The Palestinian people are suffering from daily humiliation, hardships and deprivation caused by criminal and racist Israeli policies and practices, including the continued existence of at least 613 checkpoints and other obstacles to the movement of persons and goods throughout the West Bank.

One and a half million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are subject to collective punishment and are facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis as they are deprived of their most basic goods and health care services as a result of the inhumane Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Continuation of this brutal siege has not only worsened the already dire humanitarian crisis in the Strip but also made reconstruction in the wake of the devastation caused by the Israeli aggression against Gaza a few months ago — the rebuilding of even the most urgently needed basic infrastructures — impossible.

The aggressive and expansionist Israeli policies and practices against Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan have also continued. In flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of international law, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolutions, the Israeli regime insists on its illegal occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan, on its criminal settlement activities and on the alteration of the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan.

It also continues its aggression against Lebanon through its continued occupation of Lebanese territories, violation of Lebanese airspace on a daily basis and the deployment of spy networks in the country.

The reports of the Secretary-General on resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) note that violations of Lebanese airspace, and defiance of the provisions of Council resolutions, including resolution 1701 (2006), have become a matter of routine policy by the Israeli regime. Statements by officials of the Israeli regime, together with the policies and practices of that regime in the past several months, have yet again shown that it has no belief in, or respect for, peace. Under the slogan of peace, it only tries to mislead others in order to buy time and pave the ground to further pursue its aggressive policies.

Israel's intransigent insistence on the pursuit of its illegal campaign of colonization and settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territories on the absurd and false pretext of so-called natural growth shows its vicious intention to continue to expand its occupation of the Palestinian territories rather than heed the international community's calls to stop it.

The remarks by the Speaker of the Israeli Knesset just a few days ago, in which he called for the expansion of the territories occupied by the Israeli regime to include territories on the east bank of the Jordan river, displayed once again the dangerous, aggressive and expansionist policies that this regime harbours for the entire region.

The international community's failure to stop the Israeli crimes against Palestinians and others in the region has only emboldened the regime to continue with its inhumane and criminal behaviour. Concrete and resolute measures by the international community and by the Security Council are imperative in order to stop this vicious cycle of Israeli aggression and violence.

The time to act is now. The international community should not continue to turn a blind eye to these abhorrent crimes. There should be no doubt that occupation lies at the centre of the Palestinian conflict and overall tension and instability in the Middle East. Unless this principal cause of conflict is effectively addressed, the crisis will never subside.

We expect the Security Council, in particular, to shoulder its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the Israeli regime's inhumane and aggressive acts. It should force the Israeli regime to completely and permanently cease settlement activities, lift the blockade against the Gaza Strip, cease and desist from its inhumane violation of Palestinian rights and end its occupation of all Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories.

I wish to conclude by putting on record that my delegation rejects the baseless and absurd allegations made against my country by the representative of the Israeli regime in the Council today. This is another tired attempt by the Zionist regime to divert attention from that regime's war crimes and crimes against humanity. This wicked ploy has not worked in the past; nor will it work in the future. It is preposterous that a criminal regime that possesses nuclear weapons, is not a party to the international treaties on weapons of mass destruction and feeds on terrorism and bloodshed can accuse others groundlessly. Nothing could be more dangerous for the world and the region than nuclear weapons in the hands of the terrorist Israeli regime, which has proved to have no respect for any human right or any international regulation. This danger should be countered resolutely and urgently.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Haroon** (Pakistan): Mr. President, on behalf of the Pakistan delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your skilful steering of the Council's work during this month. Let me also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his briefing and update on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, which is one of the most pressing and long-standing issues on the agenda of the Security Council and the United Nations.

The statements that we have heard in this debate reaffirm the fundamental interest of the international community in a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict leading to a just and lasting settlement of the core issue of Palestine. With regard to the latter, there is a clear sense that the current state of affairs remains untenable. The situation of the Palestinian people remains intolerable. Their legitimate aspirations for freedom and dignity and an independent and sovereign State of their own can no longer be held back. While we have to address the immediate human rights, social and economic and humanitarian concerns and needs of the oppressed and besieged Palestinian people in the occupied territories, we must also create the conditions for an early resumption of negotiations and also avoid the risk of renewed conflict and bloodshed, which have so often affected lives for many generations.

While little optimism is offered by the political developments in the region and the continuing grave situation on the ground, the international consensus and the call for peace are growing stronger in the new global political scenario. The priority accorded to this issue by the United States Administration — particularly the commitment of President Obama to personally pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict and his call on all sides to live up to their obligations — has been welcomed by all.

I think there is full recognition of the fact that a just settlement of the Palestinian question is central to ending the cycle of suspicion and discord that has undermined peace and security in the Middle East and has also strained the relations between neighbours in this land. The question is how to convert this international consensus into credible action that will bring to fruition this arduous search for peace. What we need is a transformative shift — not only in the political process, but also in the situation on the ground, since they remain interdependent.

There is no option but to return to the negotiating table. The futility of the use of disproportionate force and unilateral action is beyond doubt. Efforts to create new facts on the ground that prejudice the outcome of negotiations should not be recognized; nor should they be acceptable to the international community. We should also learn from the half-hearted attempts, unfulfilled promises and aborted peace processes that we have so often witnessed in the past. Greater political will is required to bring the parties together and help them engage in a sustained negotiation process — in good faith and without preconditions — aimed at achieving, within a reasonable time frame, a comprehensive agreement on all permanent status issues.

But any progress will be difficult without the full implementation by the parties of their respective obligations in support of the peace process. We believe that the fulfilment of commitments by the parties is in their own interest and that it should be perceived not as a sign of weakness, but as a measure of strength and confidence in the peace efforts.

In accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has a crucial role in supporting the efforts for renewed negotiations and their early successful conclusion. I believe that this is an ideal opportunity for the Council to ensure respect for and the implementation of its resolutions and to restore its own relevance, credibility and legitimacy by giving a serious push to the resolution of this issue. If there is to be a comprehensive peace in the region, it is also essential to make parallel progress on the Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon fronts through the conclusion of peace agreements, particularly those under the Road Map.

Regrettably, we are now witnessing the contrary. Some of the essential confidence-building measures are nowhere in sight. The construction of the illegal separation wall continues unabated. The suffocating complex of roadblocks and permits remains in place, disrupting and adding misery to the everyday lives of the Palestinian people. Thousands of Palestinians, including women and children, remain incarcerated in Israeli prisons. The inhumane blockade continues in the Gaza Strip, where the people are still struggling to come to terms with the destruction and tremendous human suffering recently inflicted as a result of aggression, for which, unfortunately, there is no accountability. Israel continues with impunity its illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem. That is not acceptable.

Given the serious implications of all this for the peace process, the international community is right in calling on Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001 and to refrain from provocative actions in and around East Jerusalem, including home demolitions and evictions. Obliging Israel to comply with its commitments remains a real test of the international community's seriousness and commitment vis-à-vis equitable solution.

The root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the occupation of Arab lands. In its recent statement, the Quartet rightly underscored that the only viable solution to this conflict is one that ends the occupation. That is the ultimate objective that has eluded us here in the Security Council so far, but it should not be allowed to escape us any longer. The framework for peace is there in all the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); in the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace; in the Road Map; and in the Arab Peace Initiative. All are available to us. The international consensus and requirement for peace are also very clearly there on our part. We must all act now to achieve what has been awaiting us and what, inarguably, is in the interest of our world and, above all, in the interest of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Pakistan's full support for that objective and our strong commitment to the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

**The President**: I now call on the representative of South Africa.

**Mr. Sangqu** (South Africa): We welcome the opportunity to participate and share our views in this debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In recent weeks and months, there has been some encouraging movement towards reigniting the search for peace in the Middle East. The successful elections in Lebanon and the ongoing regional initiatives of the League of Arab States to promote and achieve intra-Palestinian reconciliation and unity have been positive developments; so was the address by the United States President, Mr. Barack Obama, on 4 June 2009. Recent meetings between senior United States officials and leaders in the Middle East aimed at promoting peace also raised hopes in the Middle East and, indeed, beyond.

However, those encouraging developments have yet to be translated into progress on the ground, especially in the occupied Palestinian territory. The reality is that Palestinians continue to live under an occupation that they have endured for decades. They face daily hardships, compounded by the existence of many checkpoints that restrict their movement and access. The violent incursions by the Israeli army into Palestinian areas continue unabated, while Israeli settlements and the separation wall expand in spite of international condemnation.

South Africa condemns the continuing Israeli blockade and the ongoing construction and expansion of illegal settlements. We reiterate our call to Israel to immediately cease the building and expansion of settlements in the West Bank. The intensified home demolition programme on the part of Israel that we are currently witnessing in East Jerusalem constitutes a serious violation of international law, as definitively clarified in the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

My delegation continues to be concerned about Israel's construction of the separation wall in the West Bank. The Israeli Government has pursued the construction of the separation wall, which cuts through the West Bank, confiscating large chunks of Palestinian farmland, residences and commercial property for this purpose. Israel's building of the separation wall runs counter to the will of the international community.

South Africa has consistently demonstrated our support for the rights of the Palestinian people to a State of their own. South Africa's clear and unwavering support for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State is based on its firm belief that only a two-State solution can bring lasting peace to the Middle East.

We believe that a vision of peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians, based on the creation of a Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, is the only sustainable solution to this conflict. We remain convinced that negotiation is the only way to end the conflict and to bring about an end to the occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories.

The Security Council should not neglect its Charter-mandated responsibility to assist in the attainment of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its failure to find a lasting solution to this crisis is a failure to give hope to the people of Palestine. We therefore urge the Council, in line with its Charter obligations, to act decisively and take action to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

For its part, South Africa continues to support a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with international resolutions and initiatives, such as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and the Arab Peace Initiative, which calls for the establishment of a Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with the State of Israel within internationally recognized and secure borders.

South Africa welcomes the holding of successful parliamentary elections in Lebanon early last month. We commend the Government of Lebanon for its continuous efforts to stabilize the country in the aftermath of Israel's aggression and violation of its territorial integrity and sovereignty. We are also concerned about the explosions that occurred on 14 July 2009. In that regard, we call on all parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

In conclusion, South Africa will continue to support and contribute to all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Mr. Al-Shafi** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and to thank you for convening this meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, in the form of an open debate, which gives us an opportunity to discuss the issue, which is of paramount importance for security and development in our region and throughout the world. I also express our appreciation to Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for the briefing that he presented on behalf of the Secretary-General.

We continue to witness the effects of the recent Israeli military aggression on Gaza, the destruction and damage that it left behind and the deteriorating humanitarian situation resulting from the Israeli army's use of disproportionate force and banned weapons such as white phosphorus in heavily crowded residential areas, as well as its targeting of houses of worship, schools, hospitals and United Nations facilities. This is considered a war crime, and those responsible for it must be held accountable. Moreover, the new Israeli Government is moving ahead with its predecessor's obstruction of access to humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials.

These extremely serious practices are targeting the population at a time when the international community's concern for the security of civilians is heightened. The Security Council periodically discusses the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict and a few days ago the General Assembly began its consideration of the responsibility to protect. Moreover, international organizations and non-governmental organizations continue to focus on the need to protect the human rights and human security of civilians throughout the world.

Despite all this, the suffering of Palestinian civilians as a result of Israeli occupation and illegal Israeli practices not only continues but is also being intensified. Human conscience requires that we expose the truth about all human rights violations committed during that armed conflict. We must ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes do not go unpunished.

We await the report of the fact-finding mission appointed by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated in Gaza. The Israeli Government must cooperate with that independent international mission and with its Chairman, who is known for his impartiality. The Secretary-General has briefed the Security Council on a summary of the fact-finding team's report. This team was formed over two months ago, and we are still waiting for the Council to take concrete measures based on the team's recommendations.

Israeli authorities continue to build the separation wall and to expand their settlements in a quest to, de facto, annex more Palestinian territories. This threatens the contiguity of Palestinian territories, which is considered a basic requirement for a Palestinian State. This can therefore be considered as a deliberate act that aims to eliminate any chances of a permanent solution to the Palestinian situation and as a blow to international mediation efforts, especially those of the international Quartet.

The State of Qatar believes that the solution to the Palestinian issue lies in the establishment of two States, living side by side in peace. Qatar believes that the Israeli Government's attempts to expand settlements, especially those around East Jerusalem, undermine the chances of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. If the Israeli Government seeks to justify the expansion of its settlements by what it calls natural growth, then we stress that we categorically reject this concept, because settlement activity is illegal to begin with, and such growth is by no means natural. The general policy in Israel encourages settlement in occupied Palestinian territory, especially in East Jerusalem. It does so by offering Government assistance and incentives to encourage the transfer of Israeli civilian residents to Palestinian territory, in violation of international law.

Israel continues to violate Lebanon's sovereignty, in particular its airspace, on an almost daily basis. In addition, Israel continues to occupy some Lebanese territory and the Syrian Golan Heights. In that regard, we reiterate that Israel's decision to annex the Golan Heights is null and void. We stress the need to return the Golan to Syria and to return the remaining occupied Lebanese territory to Lebanon.

Just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region can be achieved only on the basis of the principle of land for peace, the terms of reference embodied in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and the Arab Peace Initiative. The latter was reaffirmed at the Doha summit of March 2009, which also noted that the continued offer of the Arab Initiative was contingent upon the Israeli side's acceptance of it. The new Israeli Government must therefore refrain from adopting extremist positions. It must take advantage of the genuine Arab desire to end the crisis in the Middle East.

In conclusion, my country's delegation reiterates the need to ensure the participation of all Palestinian factions so as to ensure the success of the peace efforts. Our Palestinian brothers must seriously endeavour to achieve national unity in the service of the Palestinian people.

**The President**: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*